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WF RAW™

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1996

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Page 30

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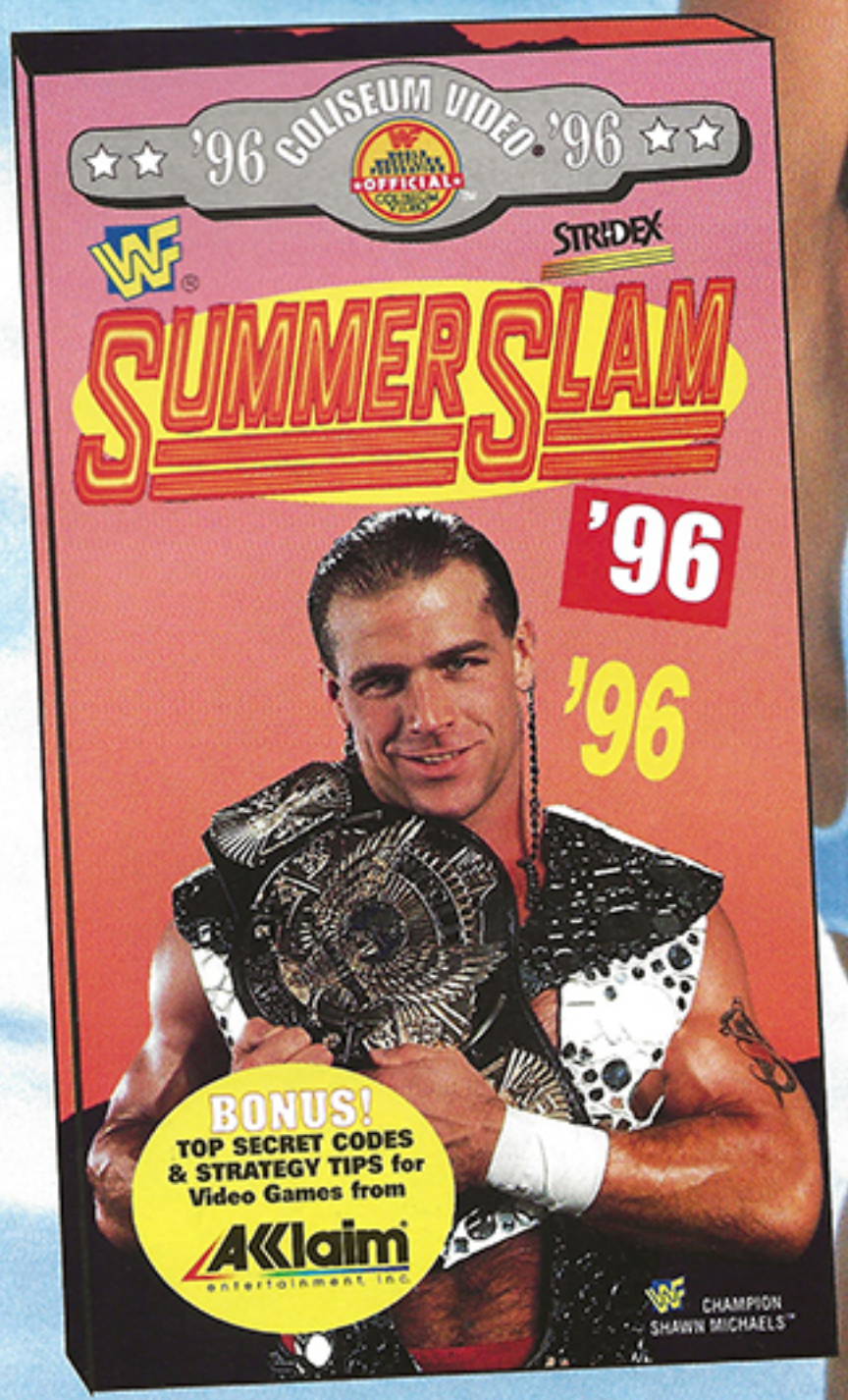

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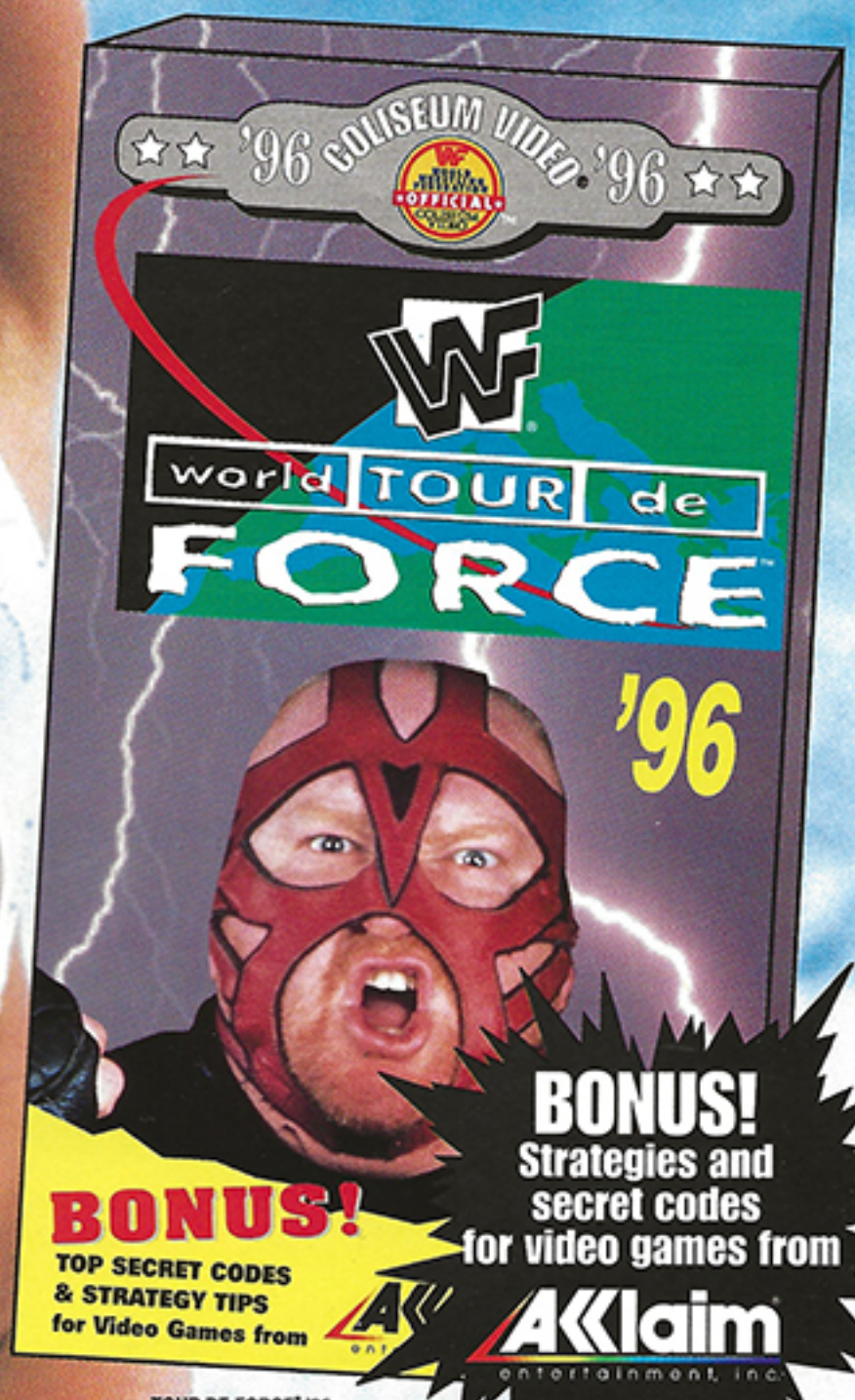

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WF RAW
September/October 1996 ▪ Volume 1 ▪ Number 3

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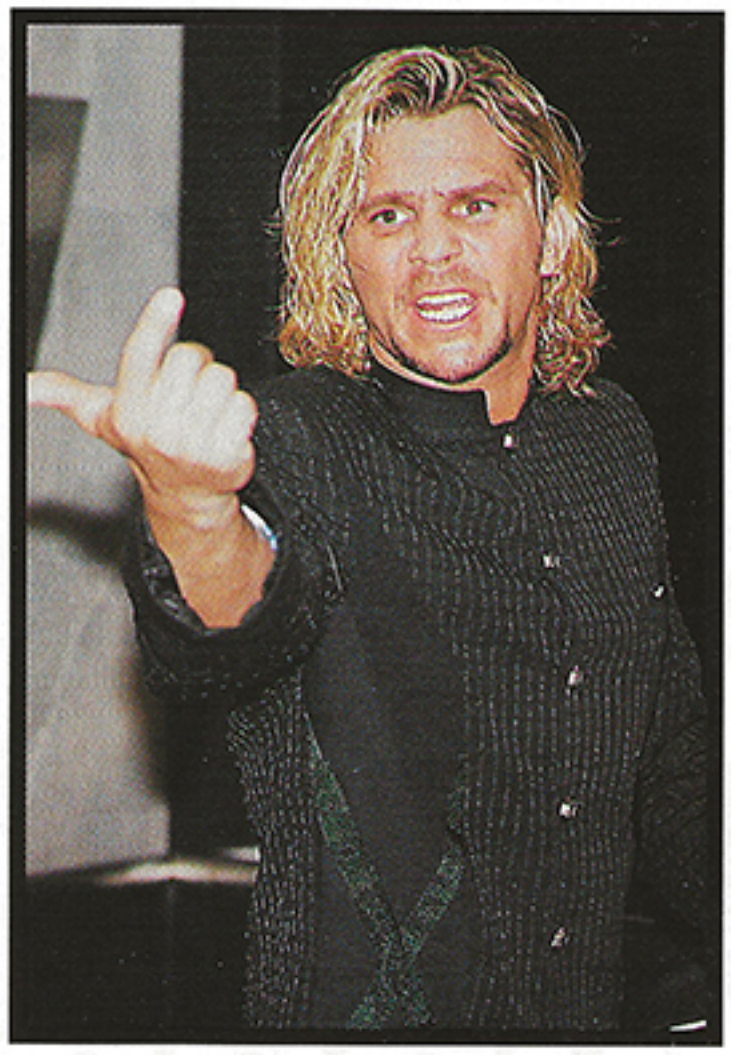

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- **Editor-in-Chief** Vince Russo
- **Photography Director** Stephen H. Taylor
- **Production Manager** Brad Sagendorf
- **Technical Advisor** Howard Finkel
- **Copy Editor** Midge Bacon
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- **Staff Photographer** Tom Buchanan
- **Photo Editor** Noah Wilker
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- **Vice President, Sales** James A. Rothschild
- **Advertising Director** Craig Cassanelli
- **Acct. Dev. Coordinator** Lisa Fox

1241 East Main Street
Stamford, CT 06902
(203) 352-8600

World Wrestling Federation RAW (ISSN 1087-0164) is published bimonthly by TITANSPORTS, Inc. © 1996 TitanSports Inc., 1241 East Main Street, Stamford, CT 06902 and published in Canada by Titan Promotions Inc. (GST No. R121189385), 2 Lansing Square, Suite 502, Willowdale, Ontario, Canada M2J 4P8. Basic subscription rates are $11.97 for 6 issues and $19.97 for 12 issues for U.S. and U.S. possessions. Canadian rates are $17.62 for 6 issues and $31 for 12 issues including 7% GST. Foreign rates are $17.97 for 6 issues and $31.97 for 12 issues. ALL ORDERS ARE PAYABLE IN U.S. FUNDS ONLY. NO FOREIGN CREDIT ORDERS WILL BE ACCEPTED. Periodical Postage Pending at Stamford, CT and other additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to WWF Raw, TitanSports, Inc., P. O. Box 394, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0394. Printed by R.R. Donnelley & Sons, Mattoon, Illinois Manufacturing Division. Distributed by Kable News Company Inc., 11 West 42nd St., New York, NY 10036.

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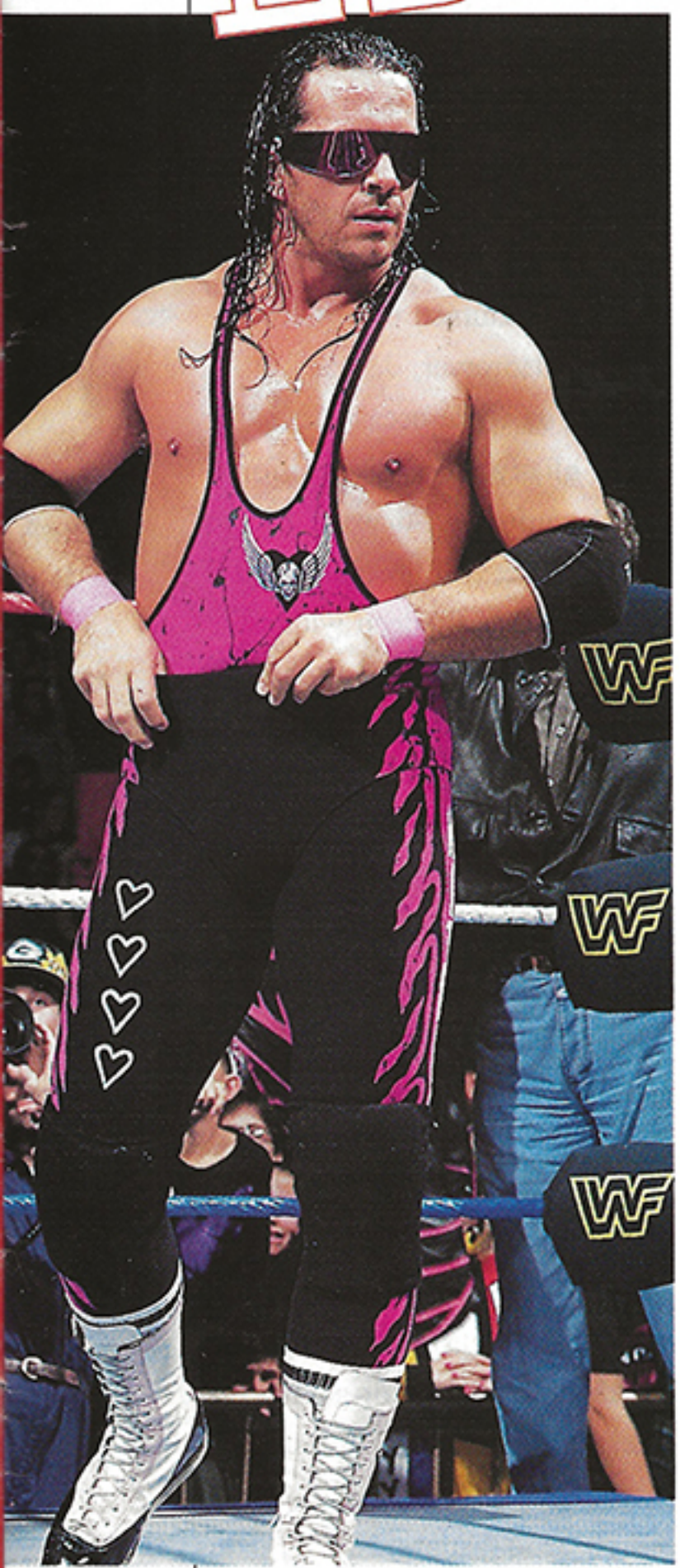
As the Harts turn...

Which side is Bret on?

SPECIAL EDITION



This just in!! Bret Hart planning a family reunion that is going to turn the entire wrestling world on its turnbuckle!!!

This one may be too HOT even for STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL, folks!!!

My sources have informed me, the INFORMER, that Bret "Hit Man" Hart may be in the midst of devising a plan that could quite possibly drive Federation Champion Shawn Michaels out of the World Wrestling Federation FOREVER!!! Even though none of these rumors have been confirmed as of press time, this developing "SHOCKER" is just too "HUGE" to keep under wraps any longer!!!

According to somebody close to the Hart family (who has asked to be kept anonymous), Bret has become absolutely "obsessed" with losing the Federation Title to the Heartbreak Kid at WrestleMania XII. Thus, in an effort to regain what he claims is "rightfully" his, Bret has not only been training eight hours a day in the family's "dungeon" under the guidance of father Stu, BUT—this same source has stated that the Hit Man has opened up the lines of communication to family members with whom he hasn't spoken in several years!!!

"At this point, Bret is looking to bury the hatchet with his family members in an effort to stay focused on Shawn Michaels and perhaps gain their knowledge and expertise on the subject at hand," said yet another friend close to the family who requested anonymity. "If you think there isn't going to be a family summer reunion before the leaves begin to fall this year—YOU'RE DEAD WRONG!"

A family reunion? With all the wounds that need to be healed, is this possible? Your gut instinct would immediately tell you no; however, when you look at the situation on a one-on-one basis, Bret has everything to gain and nothing to lose by letting bygones be bygones. If it is advice he is looking to receive, then perhaps he SHOULD consider turning to the cast of "brother and brothers-in-law" who betrayed him in the past. In order to make some sense out of these amazing speculations, let's take a closer look at the personalities involved and examine how stitching the emotional cuts with his family members would help Bret in his quest of becom-

Bret "Hit Man" Hart may be in the midst of devising a plan that could quite possibly drive Federation Champion Shawn Michaels out of the World Wrestling Federation FOREVER!!!

Is there anyone more suited to repaint that nasty stripe down the Hit Man's back than Jim "The Anvil" Neidhart?

ing a four-time World Wrestling Federation Champion.

BRITISH BULLDOG—In reality, Bret never really had a beef with the Bulldog. At December's In Your House, the two got it on in what turned out to be a blood bath, but the bottom line is that the blood didn't appear to be "bad." As a matter of fact, the match turned out to be a great competitive contest.! Now, what many of you may not know at this point is that following the match, one of my sources informed me, the Informer, that behind closed doors—BRET AND DAVEY SHOOK HANDS! OK, so now here comes the interesting part—DIANA. To make this scenario even more interesting, I was informed that throughout the entire Shawn Michaels-Diana Smith issue, Bret Hart was 100 percent in the corner of DIANA!!! AND not only did he support Diana, but my sources also tell me that it was DAVEY BOY who had to restrain Bret from physically getting with Shawn!!! As it was told to me, "If it weren't for the British Bulldog, the anticipated Shawn Michaels-Bret Hart rematch would have taken place in a PARKING lot somewhere! According to Bret, preferably—SYRACUSE!!!"

Again, let me remind you that all this is based on speculations, rumor and hearsay, BUT if you study the entire situation, it all appears very possible! Now, here's the ICING ON THE CAKE—I was told back in May that Bret Hart was actually TRAINING the British Bulldog in preparation for his upcoming match at In Your House with Shawn Michaels. That same source also later informed me that Bret actually had discussions with JAMES E. CORNETTE prior to King of the Ring about possibly being the "guest" referee in the Michaels-Bulldog rematch!!! In the end, Bret turned it down; HOWEVER, I was told that he did indeed consider it!!

So, now you ask yourself what could BRET possibly have to gain by joining in an alliance with the Bulldog? Knowledge, perhaps? In the opinions of many, the Bulldog outwrestled Shawn Michaels at May's In Your House, and the only reason he might not be the World Wrestling Federation Champion today is because there were one two many zebras in the ring in Omaha, Nebraska! Nevertheless, isn't it at all possible that having been so successful against the Heartbreak Kid, the Bulldog might have some valuable information to pass along to Bret concerning Shawn's weaknesses? HMMMM.

BUT WAIT A SECOND, THERE'S MORE!

OWEN HART—Make no mistake about it, there IS bad blood here. We all know the history dating back to the 1993 Survivor Series when Owen turned on Bret like a rabid dog. However, despite getting his revenge on more occasions than one, many of my informants informed me, the Informer, that the friction between Bret and Owen has left a huge, empty void deep within the heart of the Hit Man since day one! A void that is gnawing away at Bret day by day, week by week.

"Anybody who knows Bret Hart personally knows that he would do anything in the world to make amends with his younger brother Owen," said an inside source, who is close to the whole Hart family.

"In his heart, Bret forgave Owen a long time ago; he has just been waiting for his younger brother to come around. Before the 'misunderstanding,' as Bret calls it, the Hit Man often talked about his dream of winning the World Wrestling Federation Tag Team Championship with Owen as his partner. I even believe that at this point in his career, that may be his biggest goal."

Knowing that Bret is a forgiving person, the question now is can Owen Hart find it in his heart to put the past in the past and start anew with his brother? A couple of months ago I may have told you no, but today I believe that is very possible.

Aside from brotherhood, Owen and Bret have something else in common—they both were defeated by Shawn Michaels. If blood IS thicker than water, then it makes good sense that Owen would be there for his brother to assist Bret in taking back what the Hit Man calls "rightfully" his.

AND, in adding a little fact to this possible fiction, in the past Owen would have been wildly and very publicly crowing about Bret's absence from the World Wrestling Federation.

And as a matter of fact, knowing Owen, he would have taken FULL credit for having run his brother out of the Federation. However, Owen has said NOTHING in regard to the situation. Not a single word.

Again, the questions. But what does Bret have to gain? Who was responsible for almost ending the career of Shawn Michaels? Owen Hart, perhaps? Is it possible that Owen saw a weakness in the champion that Bret may have overlooked? Could Bret gain yet more knowledge of Shawn's weaknesses via Owen? If fact, the more I think about it, is it possible that the reconciliation has already taken place?! HMMM.

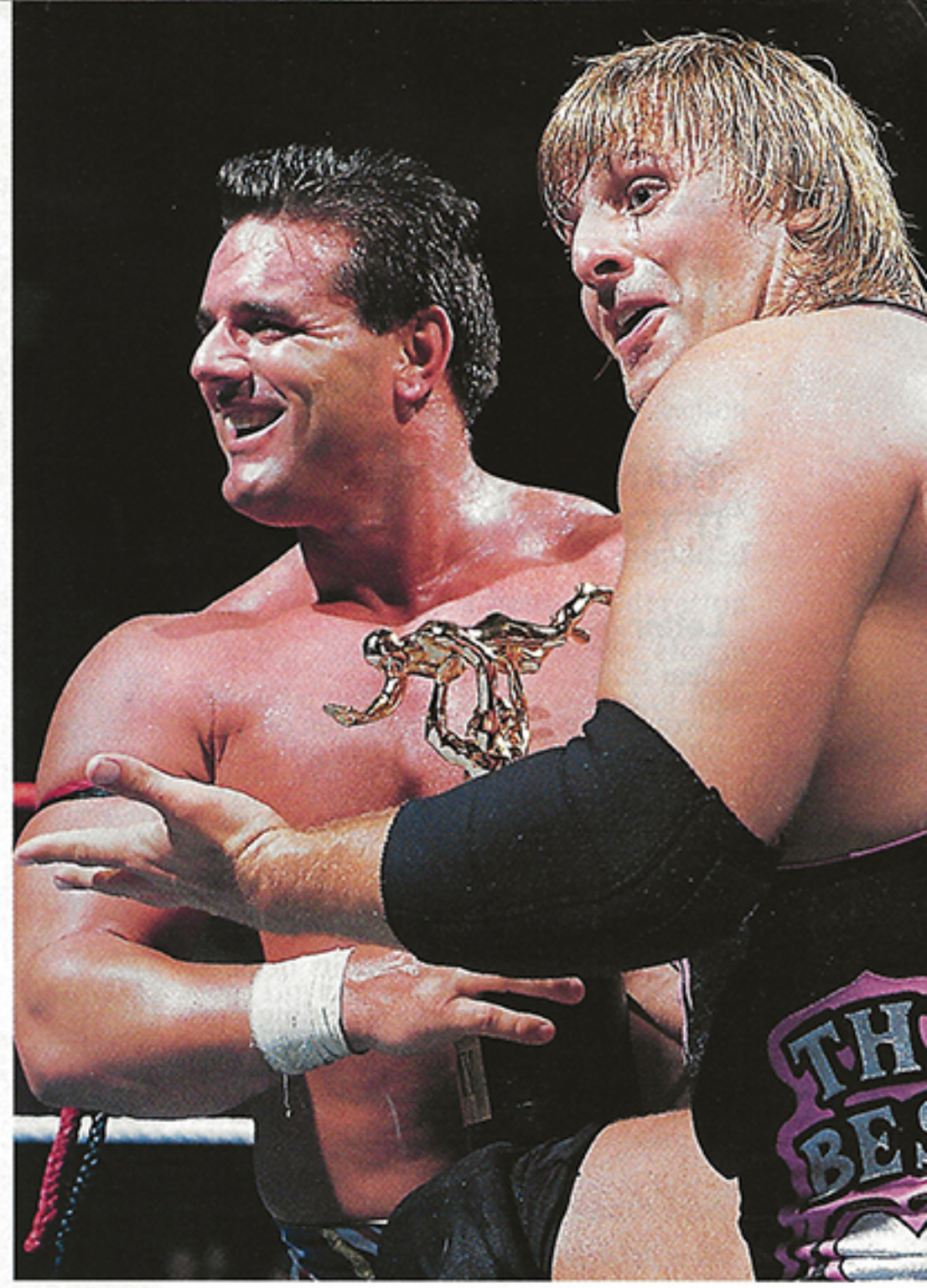
But wait a minute, there just may be one more piece to this "bizarre" puzzle. His name: Jim "The Anvil" Neidhart.

That's right, the Anvil, Bret's ex-tag team partner and current brother-in-law. Yet another source close to Bret informed me, the Informer, that Bret blames his loss to Michaels at WrestleMania XII on his inability to put the Heartbreak Kid away. The lack of a killer instinct. Being "too nice a guy."

"The loss at WrestleMania XII to Shawn Michaels devastated Bret," said a source close to the Hit Man. "He blamed himself for failing to possess that mean streak that he once relied on. The ability to get down and dirty when he needed to. The intangible that helped him make a name for himself early on in his career when he was part of the Hart Foundation with Jim Neidhart."

Mean streak? The Hart Foundation? Is there anyone more suited to repaint that nasty black and blue stripe down the back of the Hit Man than Jim "The Anvil" Neidhart?

Might Bret be considering going back to his roots to revisit what brought him to the dance in the first place? Again, is it possible that this long-awaited family reunion might have already taken place?



"I was told back in May that Bret was actually TRAINING the British Bulldog in preparation for his upcoming match with Shawn Michaels."

Granted, there are many ifs, ands AND buts involved here, but in the opinion of this columnist, the Informer, much of this makes perfect sense!

So now the questions loom large—Will the "Hit Man" surface in the corner of the British Bulldog any time soon? Will brothers finally bury the hatchet and make the entire family proud once again? Will perhaps one of the greatest tag teams ever to emerge in the history of the World Wrestling Federation let history repeat itself and once again rebuild the "Foundation" in this the "New Generation"?

For those answers, tune in next month for "As the Harts Turn." ■

Letters to the Editor:

THANKS FOR GIVING IT TO US RAW!

Letter

Dear Editor,

I would like to compliment you on your excellent production of RAW Magazine. With RAW, you hit every aspect of wrestling interest today. I especially enjoy RAW for its no-nonsense, uncensored reading material and its detailed articles for the big-time wrestling fans such as myself. Anyway, I just wanted to say: a job well done!

Nick Prater
New Middletown, OH

EXPLODING OVER THE "LOOSE CANNON"

E-Mail

Dear Editor,

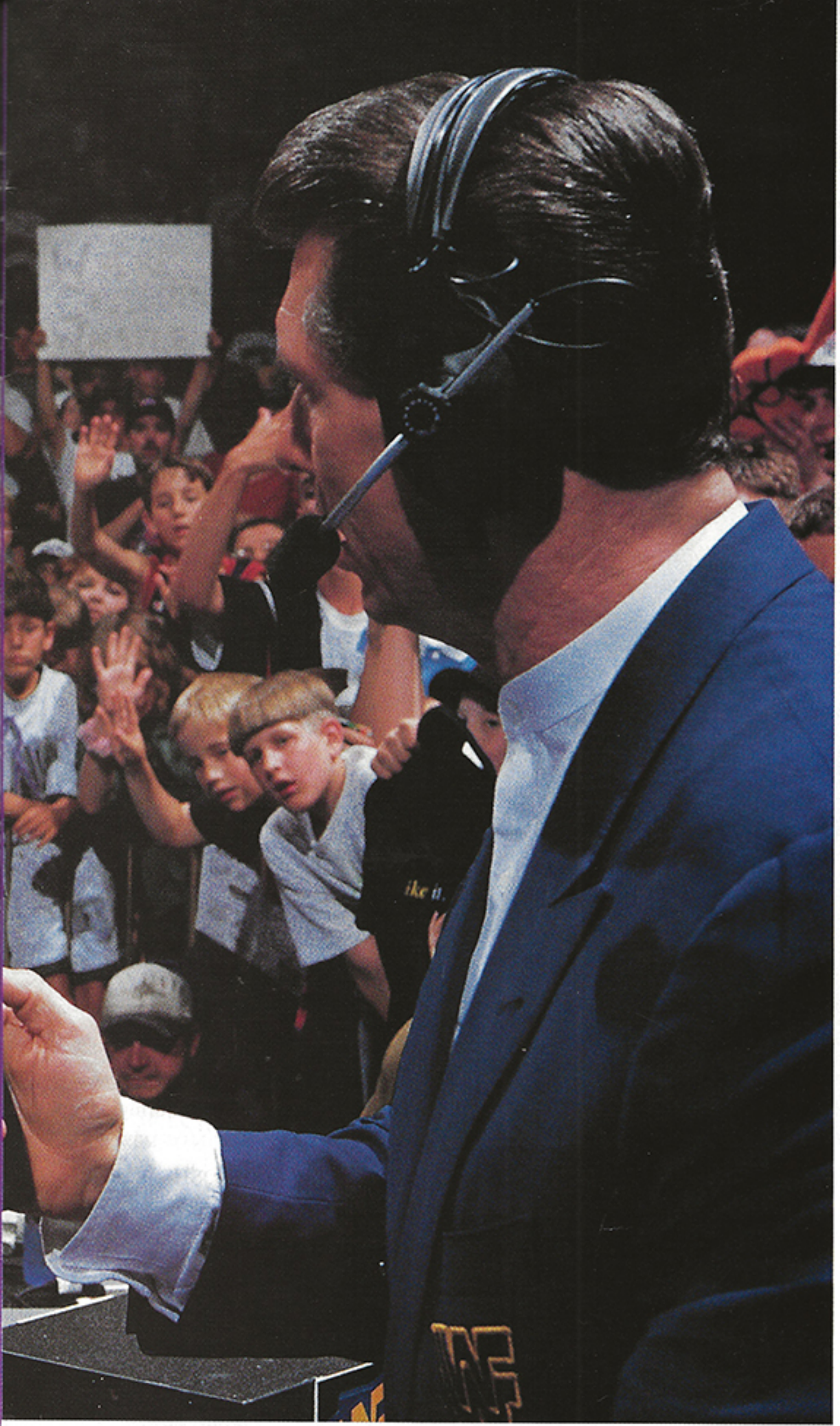
I just had to write and say THANK YOU! I just heard about the signing of the "Loose Cannon" Brian Pillman, and I can't tell you how excited I am. This guy has the ability to be the hottest heel in the world and will definitely add excitement to the already thrilling action of the Federation. Just an idea, but until Pillman is healed enough to compete in the ring, why not give him his own talk show segment, a la "Piper's Pit" or the "Heartbreak Hotel"? He is a guy who can do some great work on the microphone!

Len Johnson
LenJ8973@AOL.com

Letter

Dear Editor,

I recently heard that the World Wrestling Federation had signed the "Loose Cannon" Brian Pillman. This is quite possibly the biggest and most important signing in a long time by the Federation. Congratulations to Federation President Gorilla Monsoon for going out and acquiring one of the best performers available. Pillman is one of the most entertaining personalities I



have ever had the opportunity of seeing. Not only that, but he is an excellent competitor.

While other federations may have the old and useless, the World Wrestling Federation is constantly making strides to bring in young talent, like Pillman, who will guide the Federation into the 21st century.

Tom Robson
Philadelphia, PA

BIG BOOT=BORING CHAMPION

E-Mail

Dear Editor,

I was reading the "Fans RAW" section of the July/August issue of RAW Magazine and decided it was time to speak my mind. One of the letters purported that Hogan was a better Federation champ than Bret Hart because Hogan held the belt for a longer period of time than the Hit Man. It's a good thing I didn't write that piece because Hogan wouldn't have made the cut at all! There are certain things, like speed, skill and integrity, that make a good champion. I'm sorry, but I don't see much of that in a "big boot to the face, legdrop combo"! I think the fans have to realize that there is such a thing as a champion, and then, in Hogan's case, a boring champion.

Brian Koller
104047.2457@CompuServe.com

STILL A CLASS ACT!

Fax

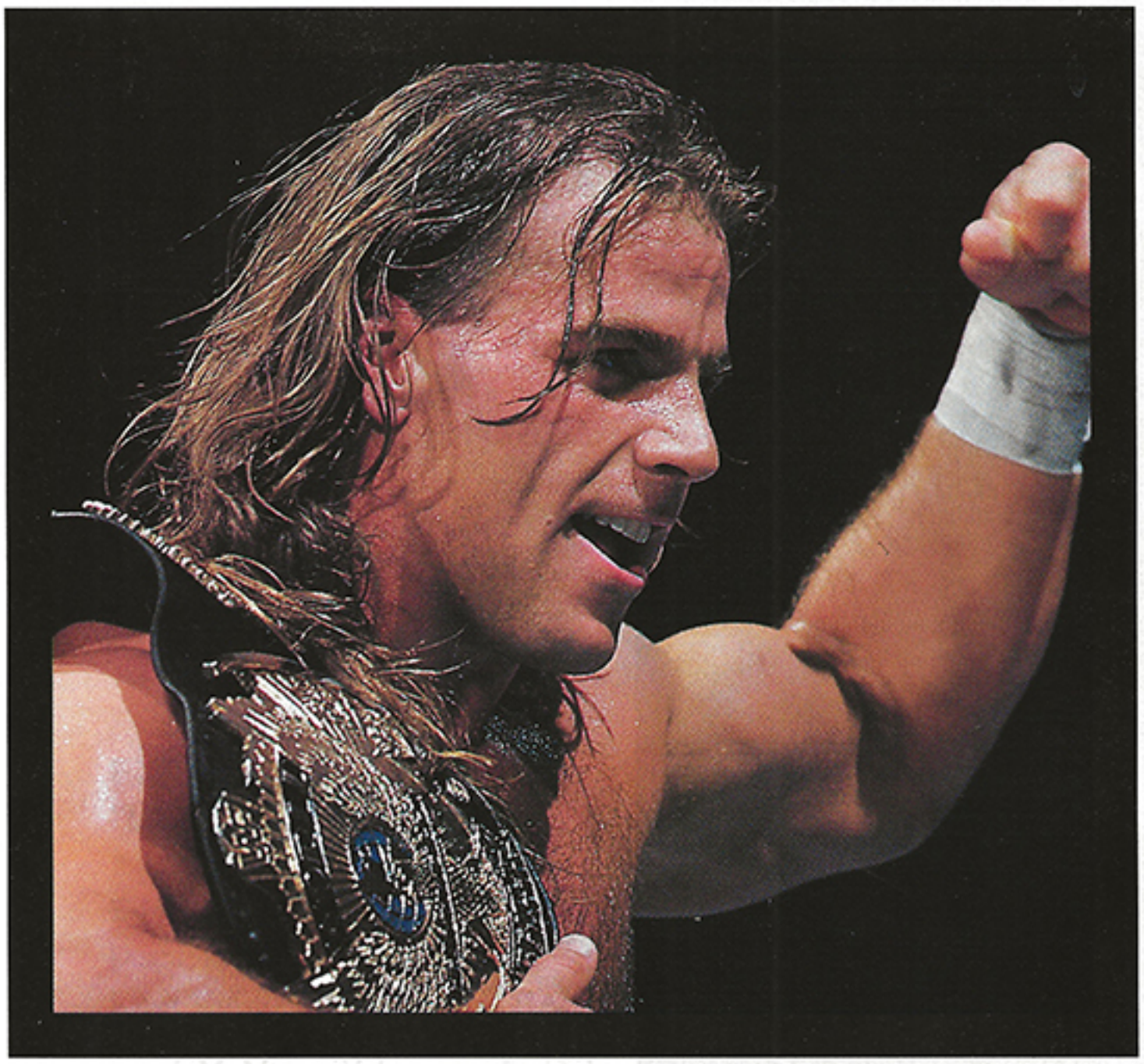
Dear Editor,

I'm glad to see the World Wrestling Federation, and Vince McMahon in particular, speaking out about the Kevin Nash and Scott Hall situation. Vince handled the situation with professionalism, something other "federations" seem to lack. The interview in the July/August RAW Magazine was truly one of the most insightful interviews I have read in a long time. I'm glad the World Wrestling Federation spoke out concerning Nash and Hall. It's nice to know the Federation still has the class it has long been known for.

Eddie Koclewski
San Bernardino, CA

WORLD WRESTLING FEDERA

(Note: They may not be official, but they ARE the rather STRONG opinions expressed by the Editor of this fine publication!!!)



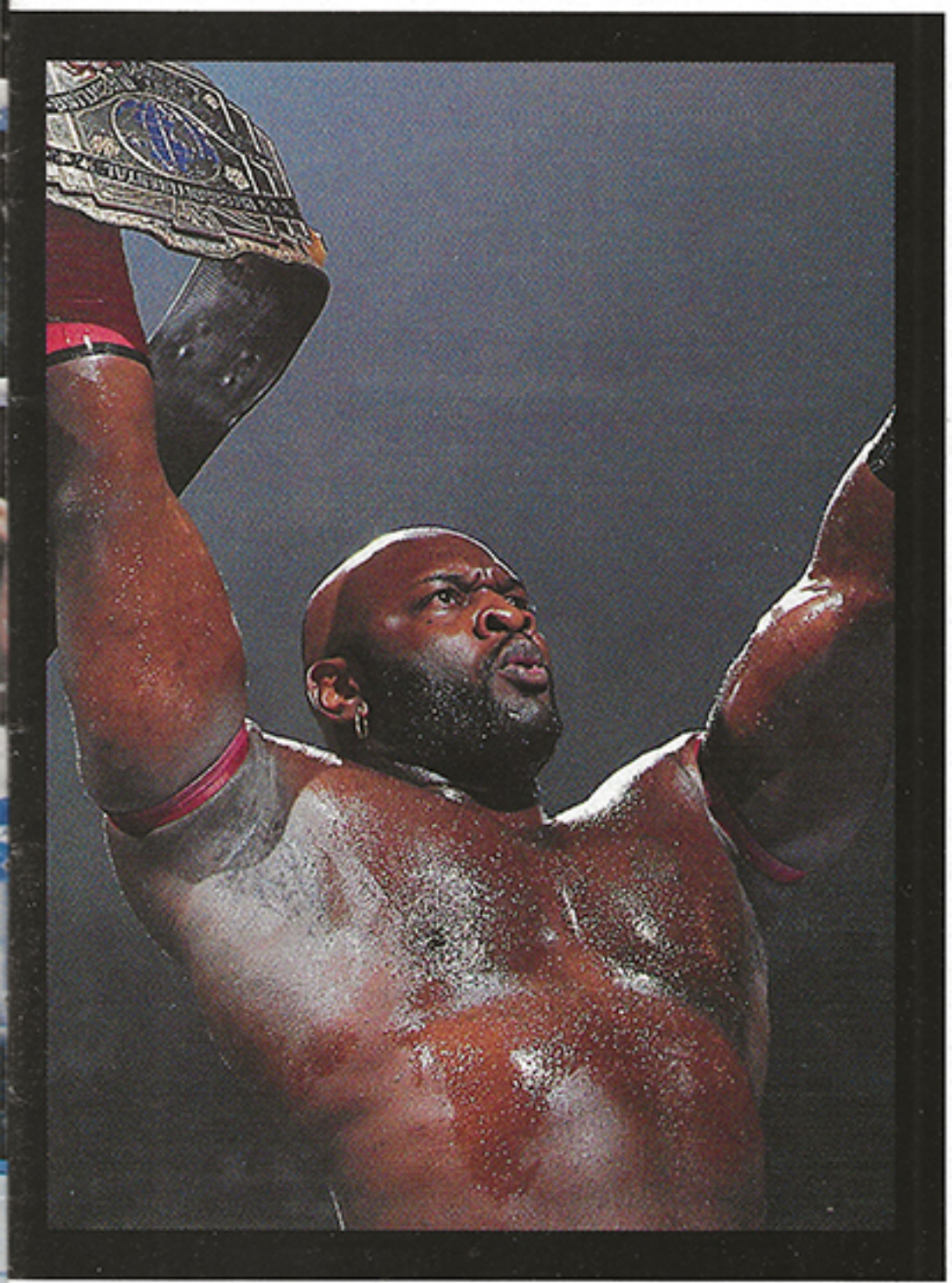
WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION TITLE CHAMPION: **SHAWN MICHAELS**

1. VADER
2. ULTIMATE WARRIOR
3. AHMED JOHNSON
4. STONE COLD STEVE AUSTIN
5. MANKIND
6. GOLDUST
7. UNDERTAKER
8. JAKE "THE SNAKE" ROBERTS
9. JUSTIN "HAWK" BRADSHAW
10. BRITISH BULLDOG

ANALYSIS

With the exception of a controversial loss in the dark (see page 20), and a scarred loss at King of the Ring, to Jake "The Snake" Roberts, the man they call VADER has basically walked through the ranks of the World Wrestling Federation. Having beaten every sacrificial lamb that has been thrown his way, the time has come to see if the Mastodon can rock to the beat of "Sweet Chin Music." In the No. 2 slot is the ULTIMATE WARRIOR who has strung together a string of impressive victories. If Vader fails in his Federation Title bid at SummerSlam, then it is my opinion that the Warrior will slide nicely into that top spot by the time the next issue of this magazine dominates the newsstands! Winning the IC Belt rocketed AHMED JOHNSON to the fourth position, just a "stitch" above a determined STONE COLD STEVE AUSTIN who really changed the complexity of things by capturing KOTR. MANKIND'S victory over the UNDERTAKER at KOTR brought him up a few notches, as GOLDUST'S royal loss to Ahmed dropped him a few. JAKE "THE SNAKE" ROBERTS slithered into the top ten due to his impressive showing in the KOTR tournament, while bringing up the final spots are the UNDERTAKER, JUSTIN "HAWK" BRADSHAW and the BRITISH BULLDOG, who all suffered crushing defeats in the month of June (Mankind, Freddie Joe Floyd, Wildman Marc Mero and Shawn Michaels, respectively). Absent from this month's list are HUNTER HEARST-HELMSLEY (who is in a tailspin after losing a string of matches to Wildman Marc Mero, Jake "The Snake" Roberts and Ahmed Johnson), WILDMAN MARC MERO (who has yet to prove himself in this division) and OWEN HART (who seems more preoccupied with winning awards nowadays).

TION'S ~~OFFICIAL~~ RANKINGS



WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION INTERCONTINENTAL TITLE CHAMPION: **AHMED JOHNSON**

1. GOLDUST
2. STONE COLD STEVE AUSTIN
3. MANKIND
4. JAKE "THE SNAKE" ROBERTS
5. OWEN HART
6. HUNTER HEARST-HELMSLEY
7. WILDMAN MARC MERO
8. JUSTIN "HAWK" BRADSHAW
9. SAVIO VEGA
10. FREDDIE JOE FLOYD

ANALYSIS

Whether you like the guy or not, GOLDUST deserves a re-match—IMMEDIATELY! Prior to being defeated by Ahmed Johnson at King of the Ring, GOLDUST successfully defended the Intercontinental Title against the Undertaker and the Ultimate Warrior. In other words, we are all entitled to a bad day, and Hollywood deserves to have his shot in the spotlight once again!

There is no question that STONE COLD STEVE AUSTIN currently possesses the greatest momentum of all! He devastated at King of the Ring, and has been on a reckless joy ride ever since. If STONE COLD were to face the Champion AHMED JOHNSON tomorrow, this editor would have to go with AUSTIN 3:16! To date, MANKIND is still undefeated in the ranks of the Federation, and just in case you forgot, he PINNED the Undertaker at KOTR. He would be ranked No. 1, but for the time being, he is strait-jacketed with the idea of reeking havoc on the Dark Side. HOWEVER, if MANKIND does indeed burn the Undertaker in the "Boiler Room," then next month he may indeed be the new "patient" at the top! JAKE "THE SNAKE" ROBERTS sits at a respectable position at No. 4, due to his impressive showing at KOTR. Even though he was defeated by Stone Cold Steve Austin, Jake didn't "slither"—he walked to the elite of the Federation. A loss to Wildman Marc Mero caused OWEN HART to fall to the middle of the pack, while HUNTER HEARST-HELMSLEY dropped to sixth, due to a key loss to Champion Ahmed the day after KOTR. A couple of tough losses to Austin and Goldust caused WILDMAN MARC MERO to slip. However, both showings were impressive, and I look for him to rebound in the weeks to come. JUSTIN "HAWK" BRADSHAW plummeted in the rankings for suffering a HUGE defeat to newcomer FREDDIE JOE FLOYD, which in turn allowed Floyd to make the top ten. Savio hangs around in the No. 9 slot, but a key win—perhaps at SummerSlam could slip him right back into contention.

Now, knowing that all you "experts" out there are going to rip these rankings to shreds, don't just sit there and cut me down behind my back!!! Write me with your views and rip me to my face!!!

Send your rankings to:
CHEW ON THIS, EDITOR
P.O. BOX 3859
Stamford, CT 06905

Ripoff Rapes, While Warrior... Is Just The Warrior

By Vic Venom

Ah, yes! It's so ironic that even though the world of sports-entertainment continues to change on a daily basis, there are just some songs that always remain the same.

I believe it was some two issues back, in the premiere edition of World Wrestling Federation Raw, that I first spoke in detail about a lad by the name of Eric Ripoff, an executive of the competition who kept his company afloat by "borrowing" idea after idea from the guru himself, Vince McMahon. Well, my friends, just about when you think you've seen it all, it appears that Mr. Ripoff has now taken his "library card" out again.

We've spoken before about Scott Hall (Razor Ramon) and Kevin Nash (Diesel). Now, don't expect me to sit here and rip them apart, because I just ain't gonna do it! Both individuals did what they felt they had to do and—in the case of Vince McMahon and the World Wrestling Federation—the case is CLOSED!

Or, is it?

Well, according to Eric Ripoff—it's not!!! You see, as I've mentioned before, Ripoff has had some problems with the "characterization" of certain wrestlers in the past. Oh, where do I start? Perhaps with "The Shark"? Or, how about, "Zodiac"? Better yet, let's go with my favorite—good ol' "Loch Ness"! Now, once I heard about the signings of Hall and Nash, I must say that I eagerly anticipated what Ripoff was going to do with them. I mean, let's face it kids, the Diamond Studd, Oz, Vinnie Vegas and the Master Blaster just didn't sell too many tickets! No, this time they had to come up with something "original"! This time they had to come up with something that would "revolutionize" professional wrestling as we know it! This time they just had to "GET IT RIGHT!"

And, get it right—THEY DID!!!

Folks, Scott Hall and Kevin Nash do not—I repeat, DO NOT—work for the World Wrestling Federation.

Even though the Federation is flattered by the compliment that Ripoff chose to not only sign their talent, but to exercise the whole kit and caboodle that went along with them—don't buy into the CON, kids!!! THEY ARE THE PROPERTY OF THE COMPETITION! There is no "war" going on as Ripoff would love you to believe! There is no US vs. THEM. It's merely Eric Ripoff at his best—trying to fool the masses into believing that Hall and Nash actually still work for the World Wrestling Federation, when, in fact, THEY DON'T!

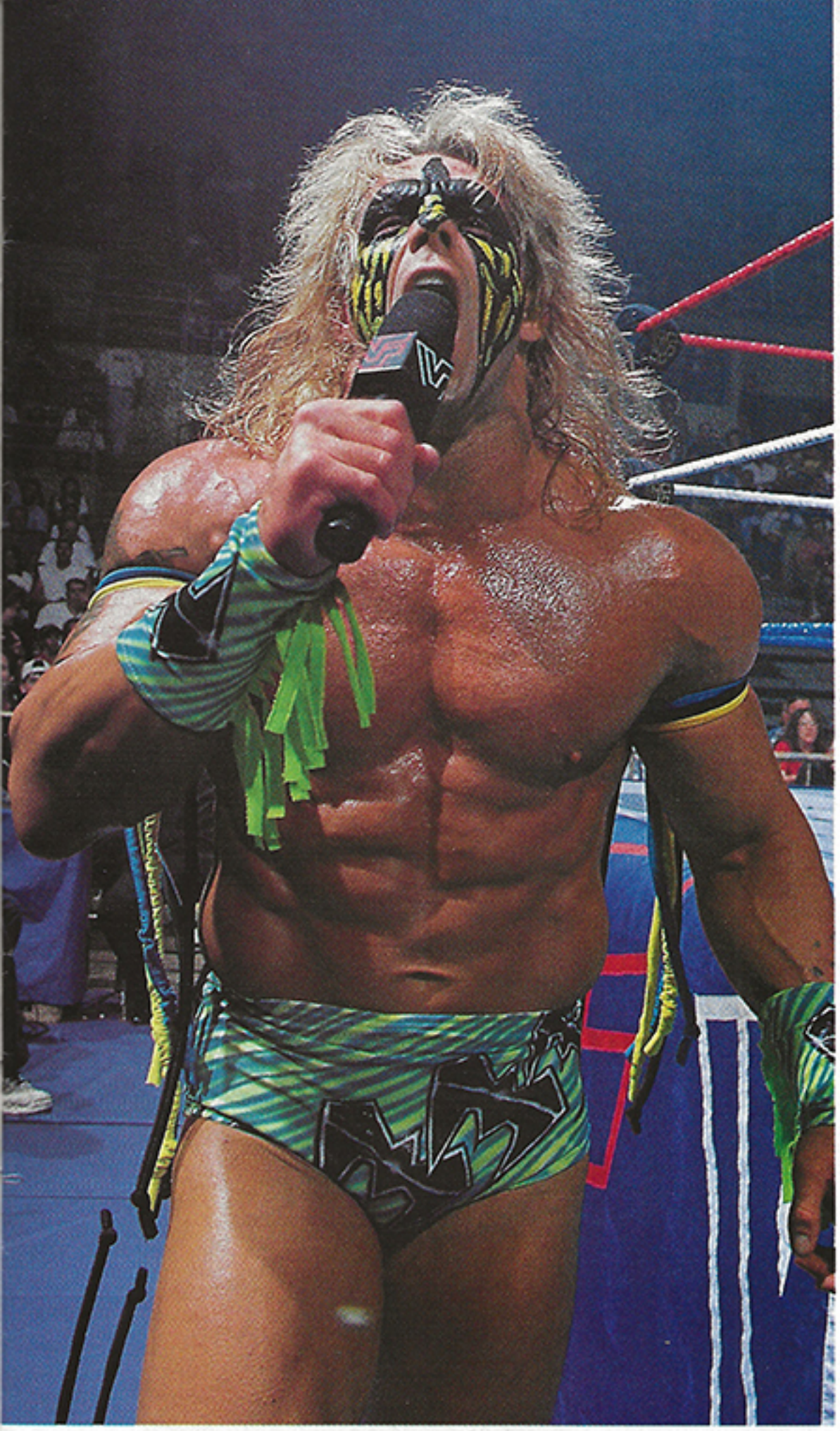
Next on the agenda.

"Warrior here... yes the real one, not some pitiful imitation or someone hiding behind their computer screen wishing they could be something they will never be. For the last three years of my life I've sat back and watched as others have spoken for me—some in support... some in disapproval—of what the Ultimate Warrior represented to the world of sports-entertainment... both in and out of the ring. I will never... could never... can never... live up to all the opinions, judgments and rumors others wish to spread about me. In knowing so, I chose long ago not to inflict the same vicious expression upon others. Therefore, in response to recent rumors of my non-appearance at Federation events in Indianapolis, Detroit and Pittsburgh, I make the following statement from my office in Scottsdale, Arizona:

Since my return to WrestleMania in March, there have been—from day one—contractual discussions for one reason... Titan Sports has not made the finalization of my contract a priority. Yet I have fulfilled all aspects of the agreement that we DO have. Although rumors speculate that my recent no-shows at the listed venues are contractually related, the truth is... my father passed away. If resolving my personal issues and protecting the way I choose to believe puts me in the Federation doghouse as stated on the money-making 1-900 telephone line... then so be it, bow-wow and kiss my ASS! Always Believe."—Warrior

(Ultimate Warrior on America Online, July 2, 1996)

Bow-wow and kiss my ass? YOU'VE GOTTA LOVE IT!!!



Not a man of many words, but when the Ultimate Warrior has something to say—he makes it perfectly clear!

And, the beat goes on.

Now, it is no secret to any fan who has followed the Federation since the late '80s that from the very beginning, the history between Titan Sports and the Ultimate Warrior has been "SHAKY" in every sense of the word. Even though everybody has their opinions as to why, the truth is that the only two parties who truly understand—I think—are Vince McMahon and the Warrior himself. However, I do realize that many of you wouldn't sleep tonight unless I, the GREAT VIC VENOM, put my spin on it!

Now, I'm not a "Warrior connoisseur" by any stretch of the imagination. The fact is—I only met the guy about five months ago at WrestleMania XII. But, being the journalist that I am, I had to form some kind of a relationship with him in order to do my job effectively. I mean, the guy may have been nuts, but he was truly an Icon! So, over the following months I invested some time in getting to know the Warrior. No, we were in no way, shape or form, "best buds," but I must say that I did earn a certain amount of respect for him. The bottom line is that the Warrior has his own way about him. He does what he wants to do, when he wants to do it. He has a strong belief, loyalty and dedication to "his" system, rather than "the system of the system." He walks to the beat of a "different drummer" which many don't understand, and many never will. You see, even though the World Wrestling Federation serves as an escape and brings us face-to-face with some of our inner-most fantasies, beneath it all—it's still a business. And any business—like it or not—has rules by which they function. Without a "solid foundation," any corporation would crumble to the ground. Now, here's the oil and the vinegar. Living the "Way of a Warrior" simply means that there are NO rules... with the exception of your own. Whether you agree with that philosophy or disagree with it, you have to respect it. It takes a man to stand tall for his beliefs—regardless of whether they are right... or they are wrong.

In my opinion, the inability to live "within" the system is the sole reason the Warrior has revolved in and out the doors of the World Wrestling Federation on so many different occasions. You see, there is no black and there is no white here. It is merely two different—quite different—philosophies butting heads, with neither side giving much space. It's not a match made in heaven. It never was and, perhaps, it never will be. The fact is that both Titan Sports and the Ultimate Warrior realized that every time going in. So, why keep inking the deal, you ask? The answer is simple—when the two come together... it's magic.

Magic for both the man... and the business.

MAN, I'M GETTING SO SAPPY I'M GONNA MAKE MYSELF PUKE!!!

I'm outta here! ■

FREE AGENT!!!

Despite the Ink on the Line

By Vince Russo

"I want to thank everyone for being here. I'm normally not this choked up, but the events that have taken place in the past eight weeks have changed the future of my life to the point where I didn't know whether I was going to live or not... to standing here signing a contract for the World Wrestling Federation. It's a dream come true. It's an opportunity that very few athletes get, and I'd like to thank J. J. Dillon and Gorilla and the rest of my now extended family. Thank you very much."—Brian Pillman, June 17, 1996.

ANYBODY who knows ANYTHING about Brian Pillman had to realize that his opening monologue at the press conference that officially welcomed him to the World Wrestling Federation was the biggest crock of s!@#! that ANYONE had ever heard.

You see, Brian Pillman doesn't even know how to spell the word SINCERE. It's a word that's been absent from his personality from the day that the doctor slapped him on his baby-fresh ass! The fact is that professional wrestling's "loose cannon" may very well be the most conceited, arrogant, self-serving S.O.B. that the squared circle has ever known!!! Aside from his three friends—me, myself and I, Pillman doesn't have an ally in the world. Along the way, he has also managed to alienate himself from every wrestling organization that owns a wrestling ring. And you know why? Because that's the way he prefers it! And, as far as the fans are concerned? In his jigsaw puzzle mind—minus a few pieces—they are more the enemy than the enemy itself! Re-

cently, when working for an independent wrestling promotion based out of Philadelphia, Extreme Championship Wrestling (ECW), Pillman merely threatened to "relieve himself" on the entire first row simply because it was something that he "always wanted to do." In fact, if the group's promoter hadn't rushed to ringside—with the entire Philadelphia police force—there is no doubt that he would have.

Back to the press conference.

Moments following that heartfelt opening monologue, Pillman did what psychopaths usually do—he uncoiled.

"Go ahead! Why don't you sit down? I think this press conference is now Brian 'F'N' Pillman's press conference! Ladies and gentlemen, the "LOOSE CANNON" is here... at your disposal! So go ahead, you want the truth? Ask away!"

"I am here to kick ass! That's what Brian Pillman does each and every day of the week!"

The truth? What does Brian Pillman consider the truth? That he is just going to limp into the World Wrestling Federation, turn it upside-down and sit alone at the top stroking his gruffy beard while gesturing at the competition below with his lethal crutch? According to him, that's exactly his planned agenda.

"I am here to kick ass! That's what Brian Pillman does each and every day of the week! I don't have a hidden agenda like yourself [talking to Dok Hendrix]. I don't have to make somebody in the north tower of some fancy suite happy! I do what's best for my success! That's what's made me the greatest athlete that's ever graced the face of this sport. My record speaks for itself. Is there nother question?!"

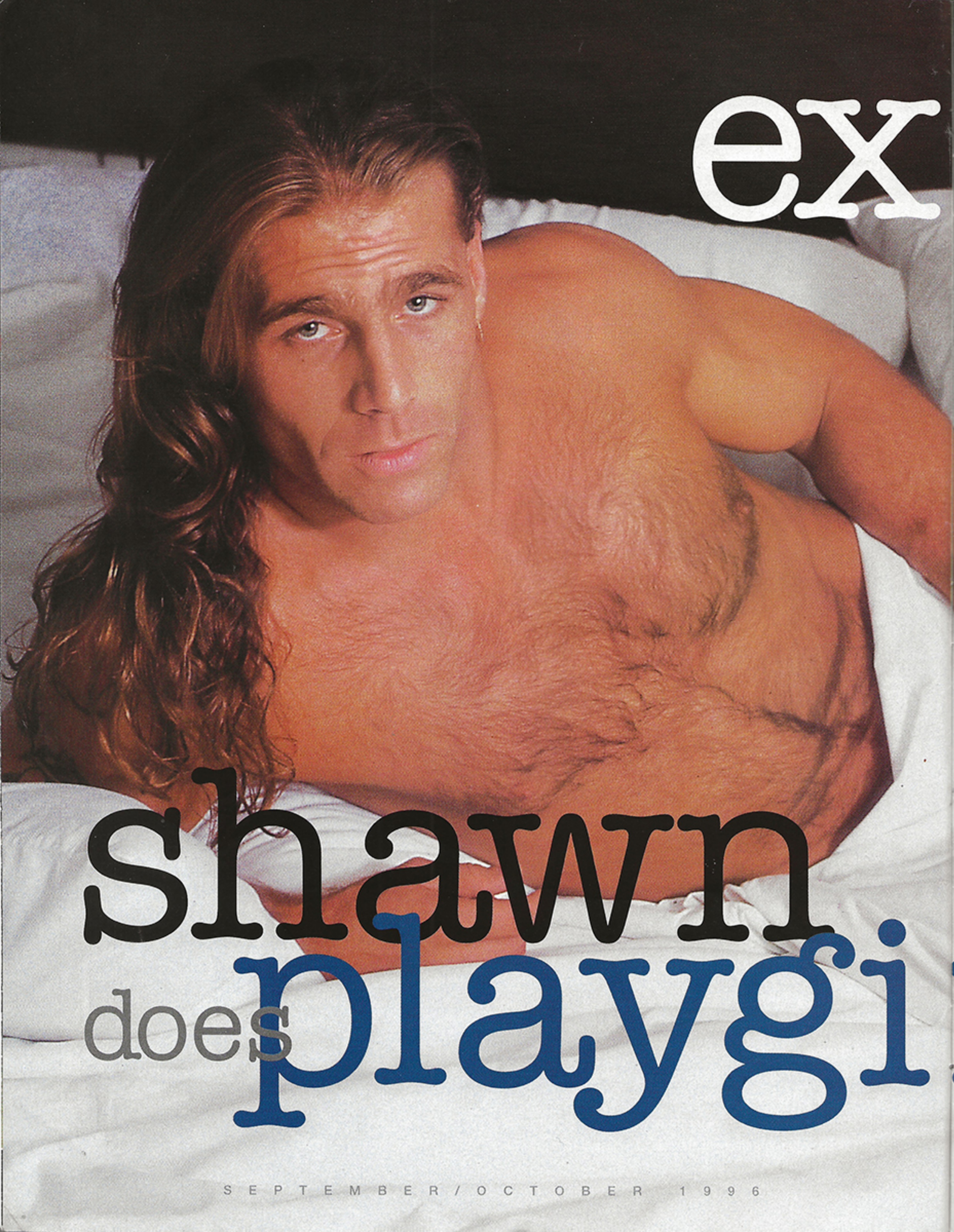
I have one. Does Brian Pillman have the ability to back up his mouth here in the World Wrestling Federation? You see, in this part of town we're not talking about 40-something, over-the-hill "Booker Men." We're talking about some of the finest athletes in the WORLD who are in the prime of their careers. All the profanity on the side of a New York City subway isn't going to pin the shoulders of Shawn Michaels to the mat. Brian Pillman has to do that—physically. The question: Is he capable of backing up his ferocious bark with a bite that is capable of breaking skin?

"People think I'm conceited?! Well, I'm just convinced Mr. Hendrix... that I'M THAT GOOD! Anybody else with this injury (Pillman appeared on crutches due to a severe auto accident that he suffered weeks earlier) would still be in a hospital bed with IVs sticking out of him waiting for the nurse to change the bedpan. I don't give a goddamn what the hell you think, you and your World Wrestling Federation superstars! You get me a medical release right now, and I will get out there and show them where it's at!!!"

Are you that good, Brian Pillman? Or, are you just a gimping madman with a crutch and a lot of talk. My opinion? I believe Pillman's that good. I'll go even one step further—I believe Brian Pillman has the potential to be the Rowdy Roddy Piper of the 21st century. Now, I know that's a lot of quilt to fill, but in my view, the "Cannon" is more than capable—it's just a matter of his concentrating more on the "walk" than the "talk." You see, Piper didn't become the "Hot Rod" by just slappin' Superflys around with coconuts. He backed up his venom with a punishing, brutal, physical attack. In the pit he could talk a good game, but once on the canvas—the game got even better! The fact is that Pillman can roar all he wants, but the "Free Agent" is now going to have to back it up in the only place it counts—between the ropes. If he is capable of doing that—and I believe that he is—than the World Wrestling Federation—AS WE KNOW IT—may never be the same again!

"I've had enough of this garbage! You can all go back to your 9-5 working class hero molds! I'm gonna get the !@#$%! out of here!"

Welcome, Brian Pillman. ■



ex

shawn does playgi

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1996

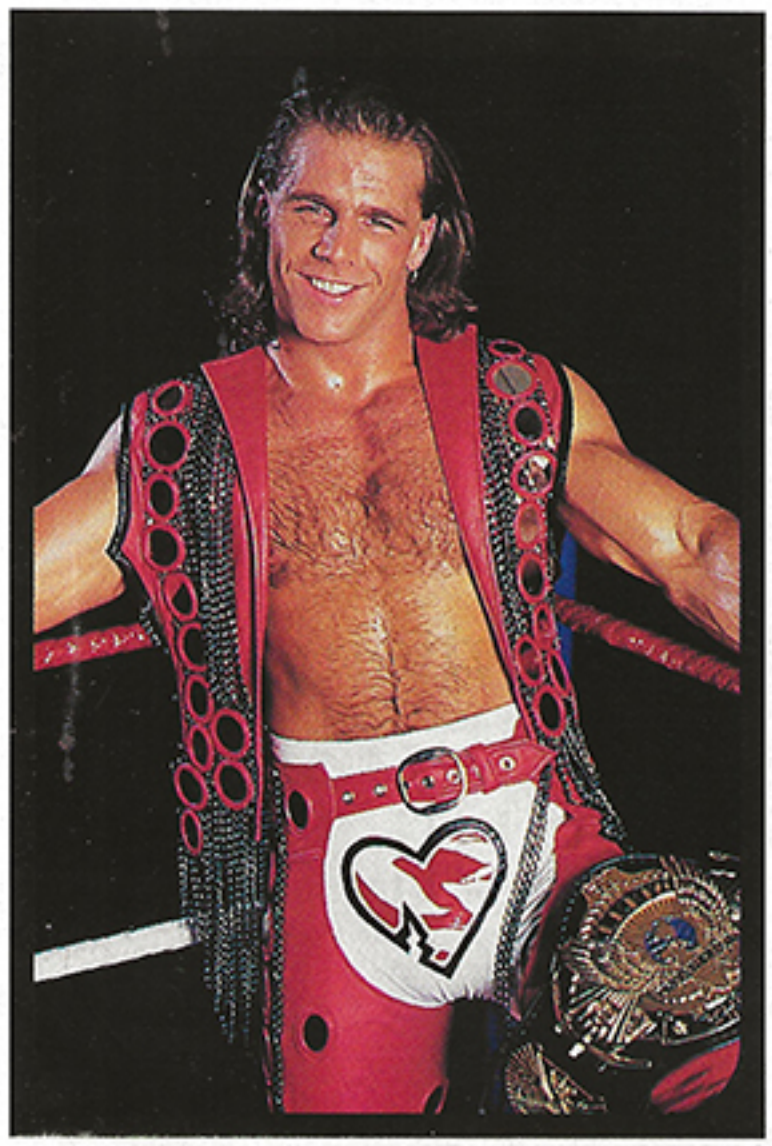
tra!!!

Editor's Note: World Wrestling Federation Champion Shawn Michaels is featured on the cover of October's Playgirl magazine. Playgirl's interview with the Heartbreak Kid and the accompanying photo spread are dynamite. Want to know Shawn's thoughts on love and what makes a female get his juices going? Read it in Playgirl. And here read about what happened behind the scenes when this sizzling story evolved.

By Ed Ricciuti

Photography by Greg Weiner

From a female standpoint, Judy Cole has a job to die for. As editor-in-chief of Playgirl magazine, she regularly meets and interviews men who, by any definition, are the world's hottest males. We won't mention names, because we don't want to start their competitive testosterone working overtime after they read what she has to say about Shawn Michaels.However, you have seen them in magazines, on the television tube and screen. They've got great buns, biceps and abs, eyes that speak of love, sculpted jaws and cheekbones, sensuous lips and silver tongues.



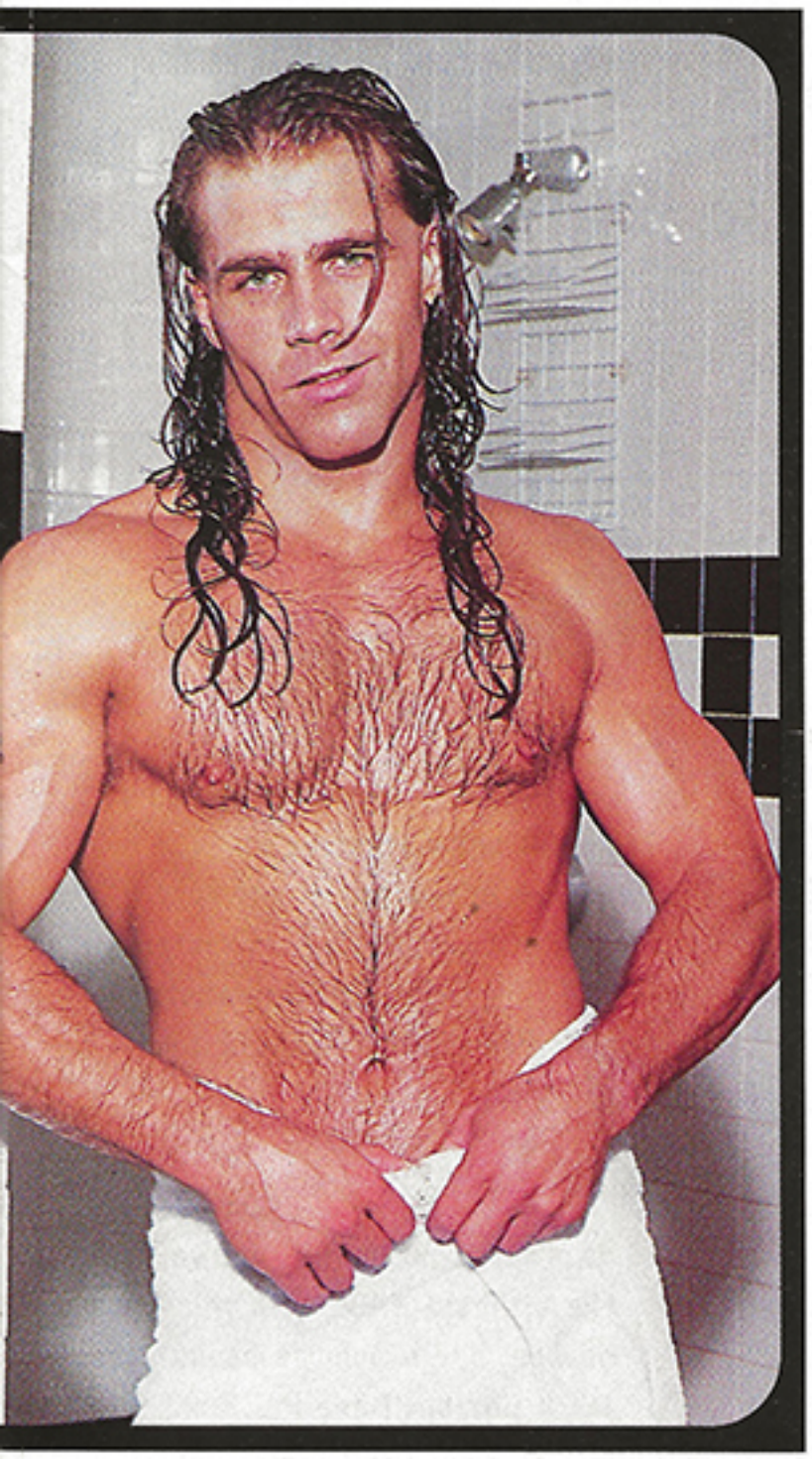
"I work with beautiful men all the time," she says. You get the impression that, while she is by no means jaded about it, she is inured to dealing with guys who turn the eyes of millions of women glassy, to put it mildly. Even so, Shawn Michaels blew her away.

"If I didn't love my boyfriend so much, I would have been all over Shawn like a cheap suit," says Judy. "He's gorgeous and terribly appealing. When he comes into the ring, he struts and poses. He's cocky. He's all macho swagger. But one-on-one with a woman, he's different. He's sweet. He makes you feel that he would do anything for a woman he really loved. He'd be a pleasure to live with. I think that he'd even take out the trash."

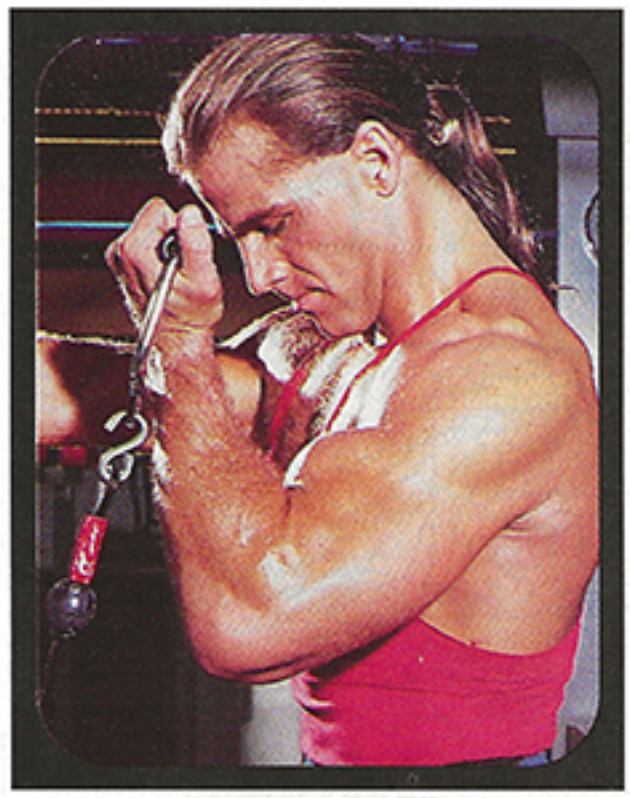
"If I didn't love my boyfriend so much, I would have been all over Shawn like a cheap suit."

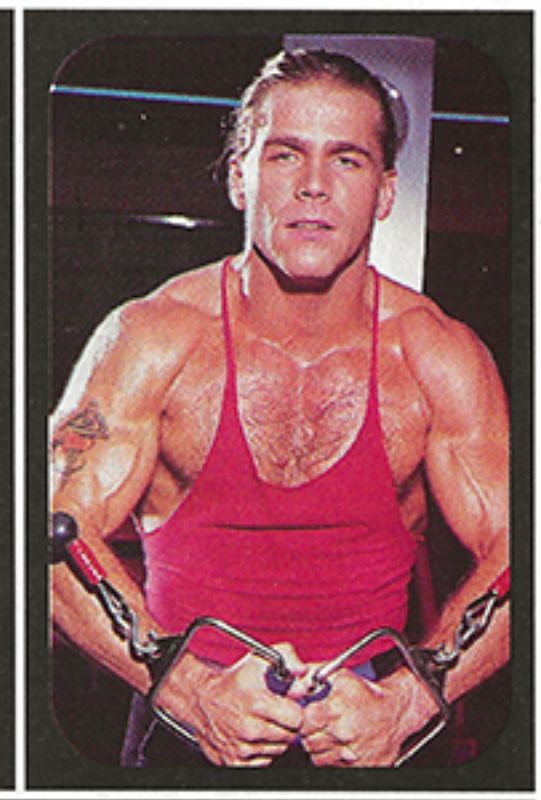
Judy, talking while standing near a life-size cut-out of Shawn in her office, continued her expert assessment of the Heartbreak Kid."He is remarkably good-looking. You can't take your eyes off him—hello."

Playgirl's editorial honcho interviewed Shawn in the World Wrestling Federation gym in Stamford, Connecticut, where she noted that he has a "near-perfect chest and abs." So magnetic is Shawn, she says, "You can't take your eyes off him. He's part of the Federation's New Generation—sexier, smarter and upscale. And he was a pleasure to work with."

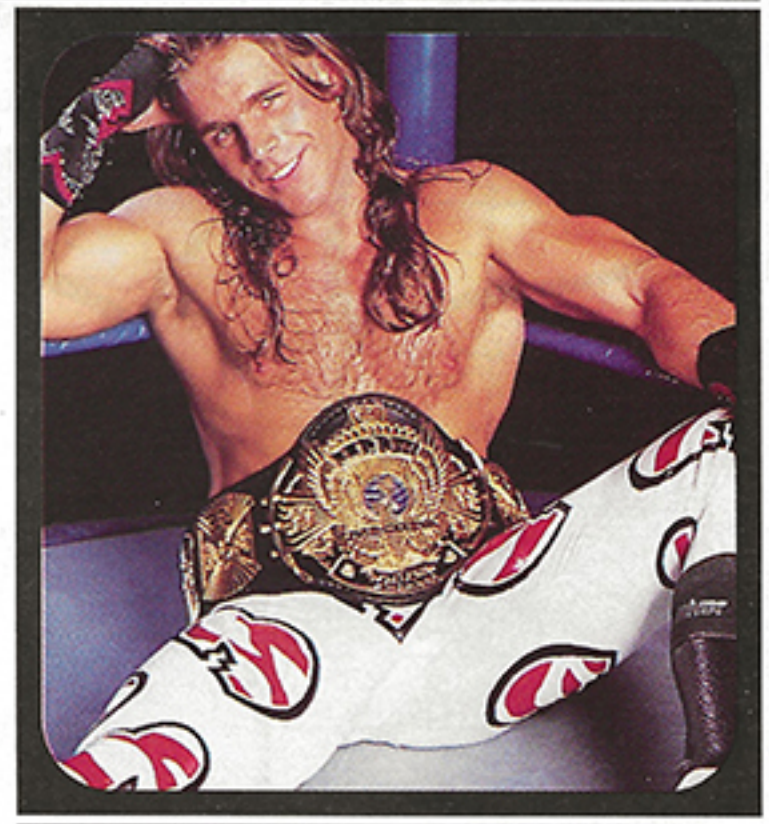


Judy's interview with Shawn took hours. She began after he had finished pumping some heavy iron. He was dripping with sweat as he sat next to her — a few inches away—on a bench in the gym. She locked up with his "blue-green eyes" and admits that she wondered about reaching out and touching that muscular chest, covered with "golden-bronzed curls," the object of a million female fantasies. When it came to matters of sex, love and what attracts Shawn most about a woman, her questions were penetrating, and his answers got right down to the nitty-gritty of the issue.

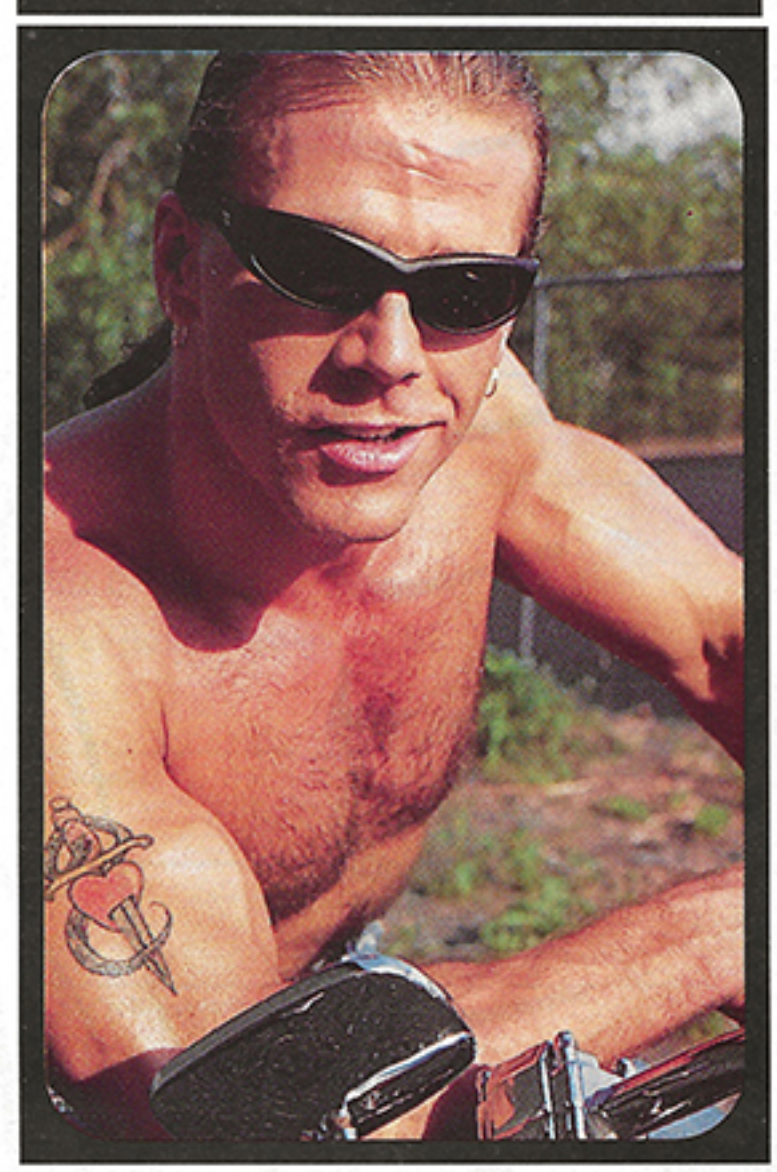




Judy queried the Heartbreak Kid about how he feels showing off his body. She asked the Boy Toy what turns him on most about a female. She even had him reveal the last pick-up line that actually worked on him. And, in answer to all her questions, Shawn came absolutely clean.



For all Judy's enthusiasm about Shawn, however, the idea of interviewing him did not originate with her. "A woman who works for another magazine in our building is a great World Wrestling Federation fan," says Judy. "She brought me a poster of Shawn and told me that I had to put him in Playgirl. I did some research and realized how many people out there watched the World Wrestling Federation and knew it was a win-win situation." And that's how it all came about.



After Judy finished her interview with Shawn, she did a bit more personal research."I asked him if he was ticklish," she says. "He told me he wasn't. So I decided to find out if he was telling the truth. I reached out and tickled the sole of his foot. I found out that he's not ticklish at all." ■

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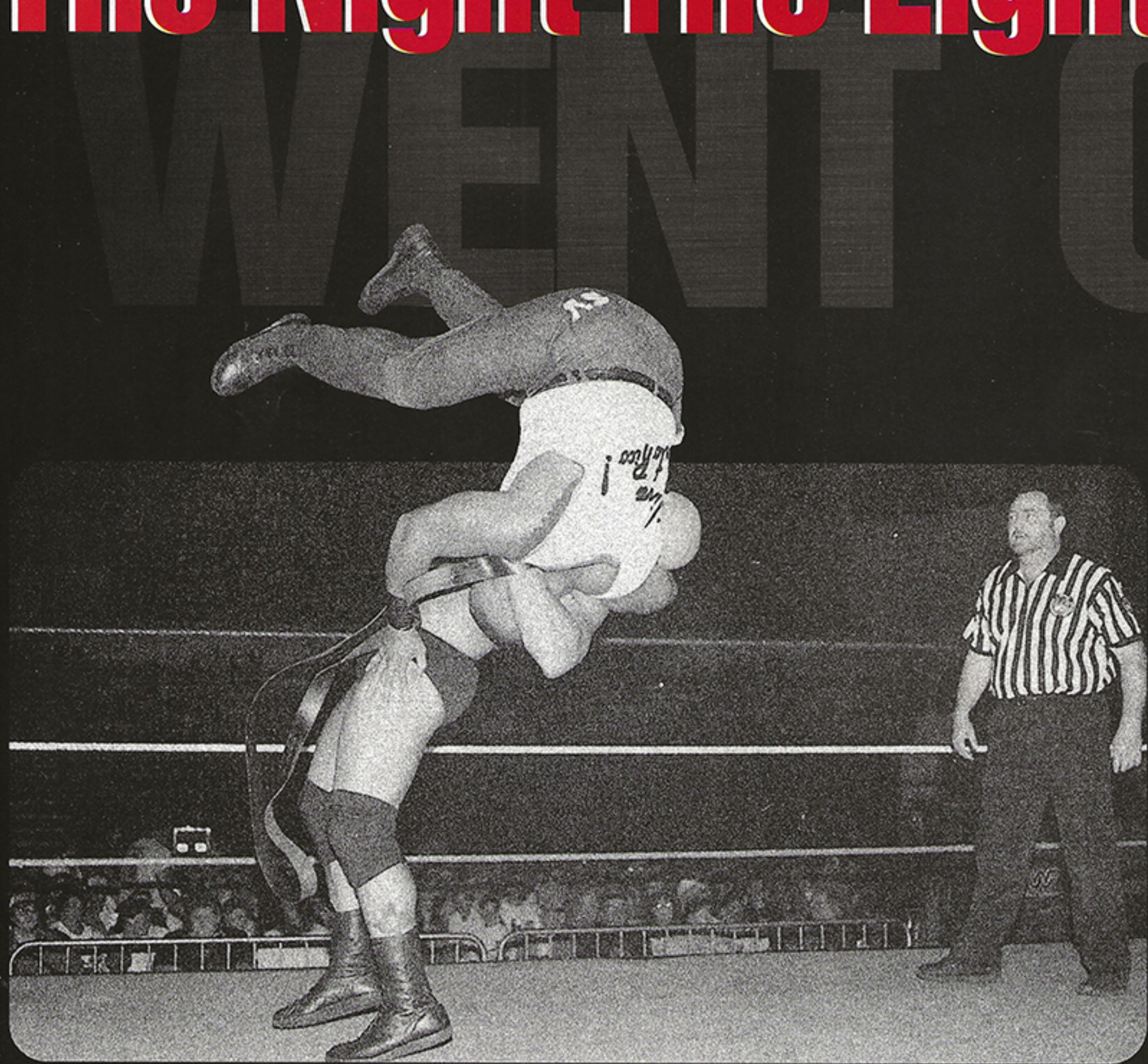
In Your House Results

The Night The Lights Went Out



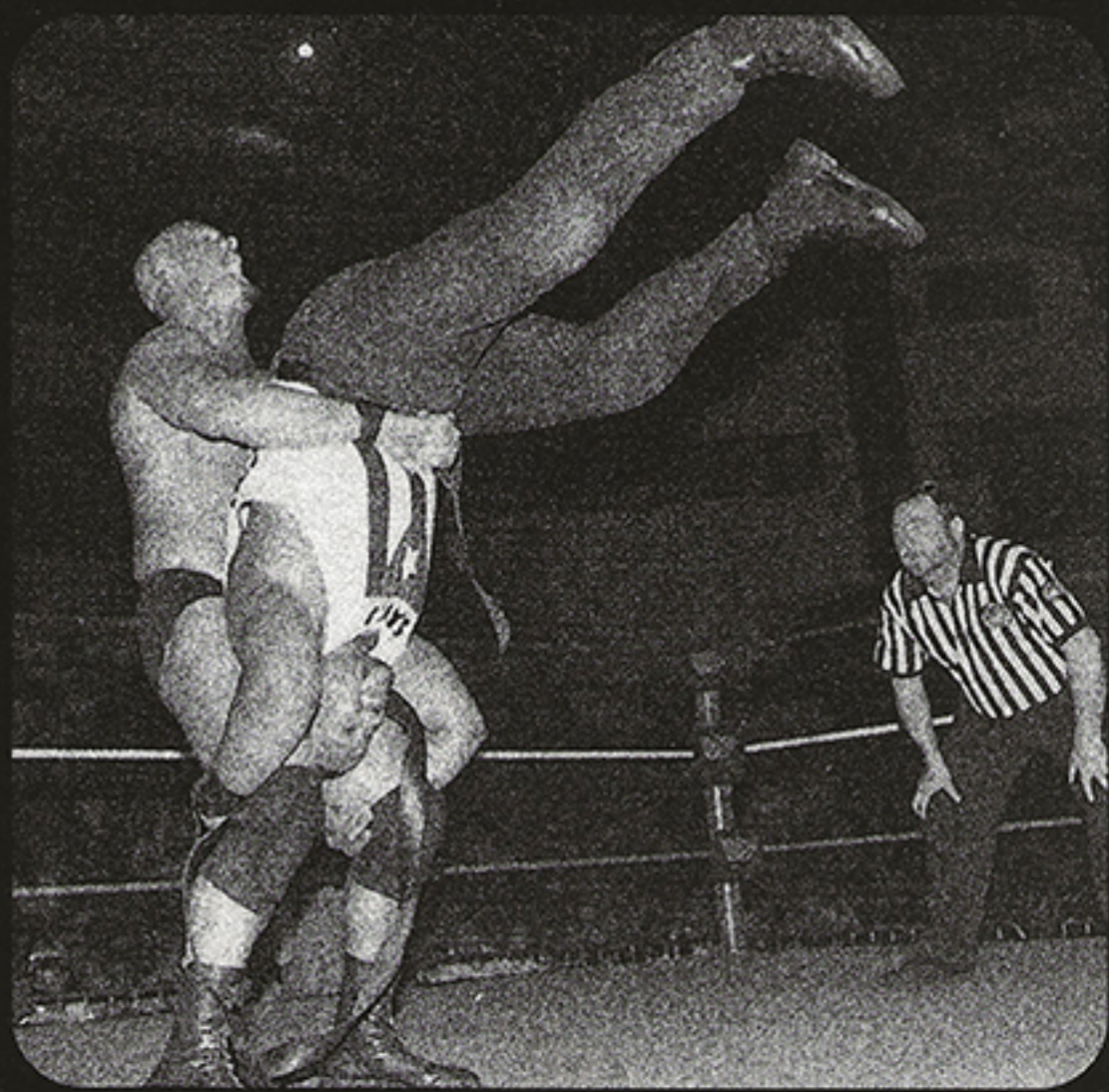
Back in the early 1970s, about the same time many of you were still getting over Woodstock, a song by Vicki Lawrence took the nation by storm. "The Night the Lights Went Out in Georgia" rose to the top of the charts and was played on the radio daily. Too bad she couldn't wait 26 more years to release it! It would have sold MILLIONS in South Carolina!

On May 26, the World Wrestling Federation held In Your House: Beware of Dog in Florence, South Carolina, for a packed house and a massive pay-per-view audience. The event was set to be a blockbuster event—big-time matches from top to bottom. All three Federation titles were on the line.

But, like a scene out of "Twister," the sky turned black... and the Florence Civic Center soon followed. The rest of

By Bill Banks

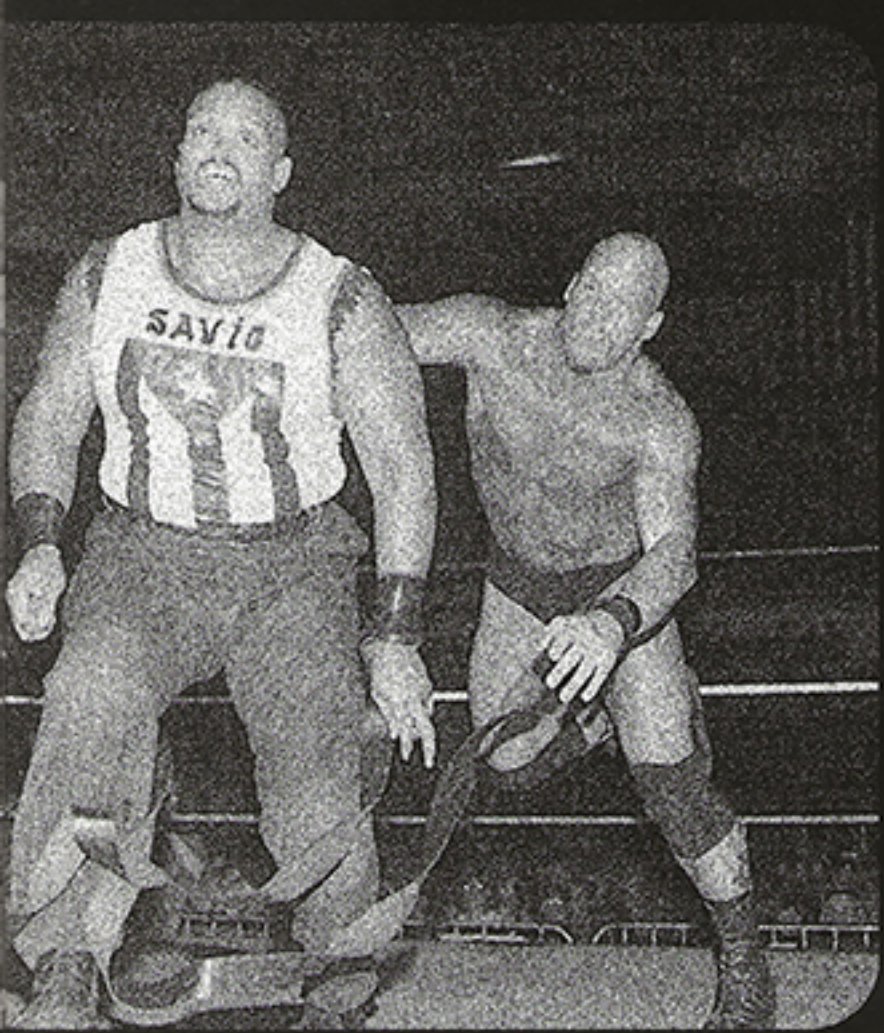
UTLW

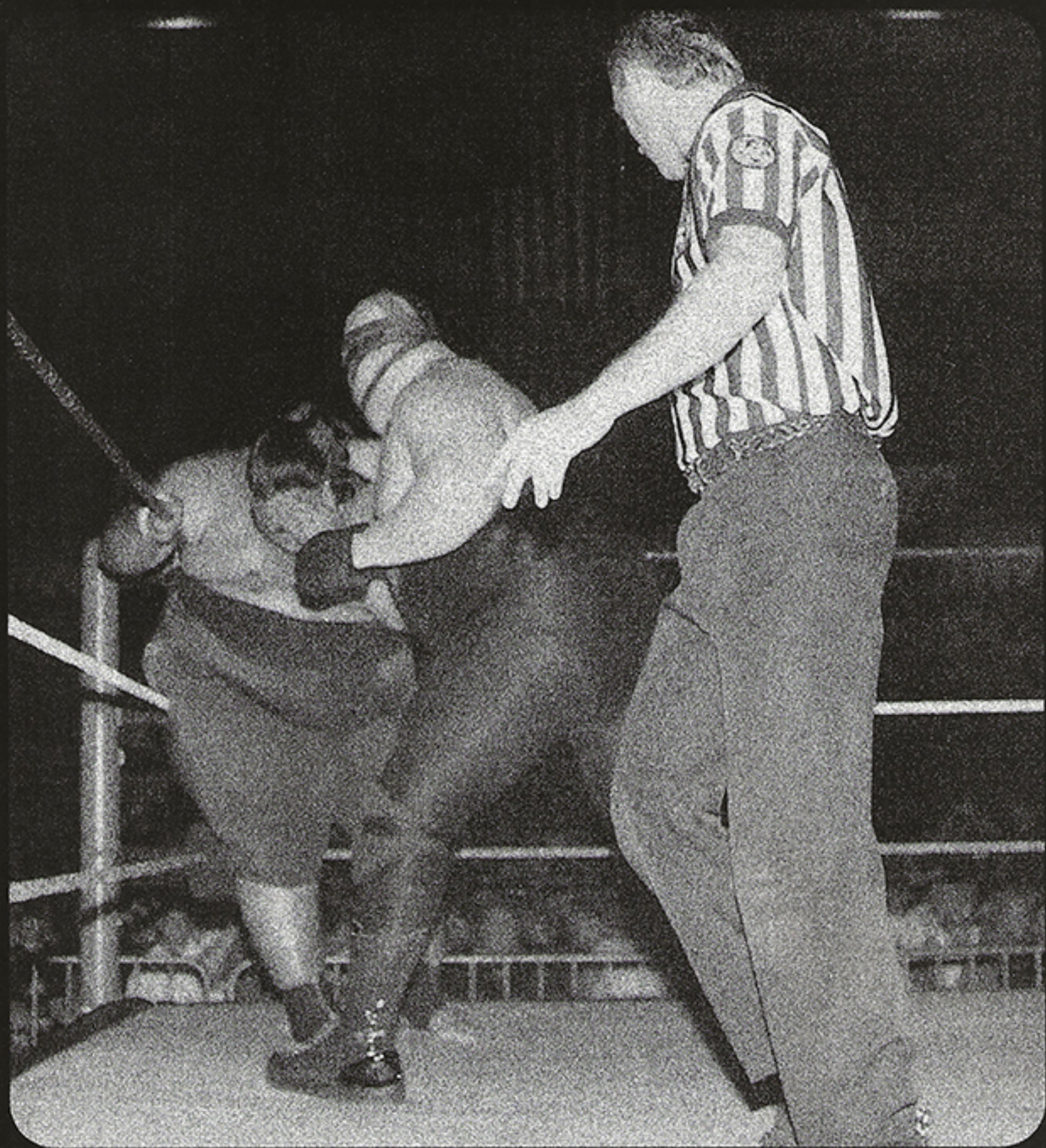


what happened that night is history. Right around the time Savio Vega was to enter the ring for his match with Stone Cold Steve Austin, lightning crashed, and the screen went black for millions of viewers across the world. Unless you were in the Florence Civic Center that night, called the Federation 900-number or joined the Federation Online for live coverage on AOL, you were shut out of the action—three matches that very few people ever saw, let alone know the details of.

Despite the fact that those three matches were once again rescheduled two days later on pay-per-view live, many wonder what the results of the matches that took place on that historic night. What happened in the dark during the Goldust vs. Undertaker match? Which one of the two was shoved into the casket? Who won the Strap Match between Savio Vega and Stone Cold Steve Austin? Did Savio become a chauffeur that night? And not many people got to see two mountains collide when former sumo wrestler Yokozuna faced Vader. Which BIG man won?

Those matches may have happened with the lights off... but now, thanks to World Wrestling Federation Raw Magazine, you won't be in the dark anymore! The following are NEVER-





DiBiase did nothing! On more than one occasion, Stone Cold distracted the referee while Savio was left alone with DiBiase on the ropes—not even a slap to the face!

Do you often wonder why Stone Cold doesn't even miss Ted? Do you wonder why Austin regrets having DiBiase as a manager in the first place now? At the end of the match, the Million Dollar Man saw Savio following Austin from behind as he tagged the corners. Stone Cold didn't even realize Savio was doing this until the bell sounded and Vega's hand was raised in victory! Not a peep from DiBiase the entire time... not a word came from his mouth about what was happening. All that DiBiase could do was clap his hands and yell "Let's go, Steve!"

before-seen pictures of that night, with EXCLUSIVE results. You won't find these anywhere else! The lights went out in Florence, South Carolina, last May 26—but no one can stop World Wrestling Federation Raw from turning the lights back on!

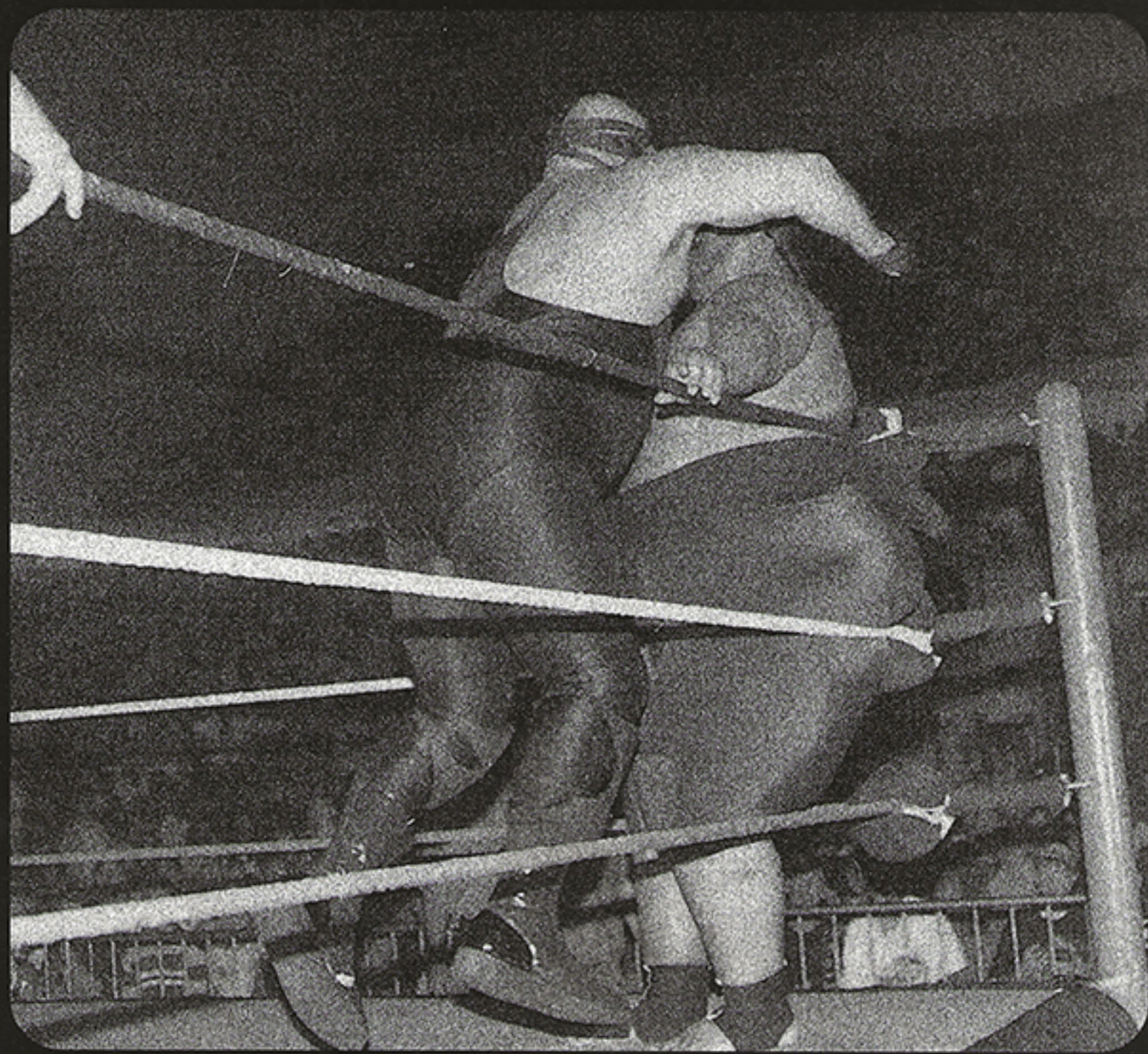
The Savio Vega-Stone Cold Steve Austin Strap Match was eagerly anticipated from the very start of the night—millions of fans wanted to see whether or not the Latin Sensation would become a chauffeur for the Million Dollar Man. But, due to the fact that snow appeared on the screen of millions of pay-per-view buyers' homes at about the time Savio was walking into the ring, no one got to see how in fact Ted DiBiase did nothing to help his protegé that night.

During the match, the crowd erupted for the first time since the power outage when the loud slap of Stone Cold hitting Savio with the strap echoed in the arena. Savio countered with a kick to the groin, which sent Stone Cold in agony to the mat. The Latin Sensation placed Austin on the top rope—a superplex soon followed. The action then spilled out of the ring. Savio and Austin spent over five minutes on the outside of the ring in the dark at one point—and

Honest mistake, you say? Maybe DiBiase didn't see what Savio was doing? Two nights later, again DiBiase saw Savio pulling the same trick! Just as Austin was about to touch the last corner, Vega touched it first... where was the Million Dollar Man this time? He actually saw it happening! DiBiase couldn't use the lighting as his excuse this time. No need to ever wonder again why Austin is happy to be rid of the man who was anything but a manager to him that night in Florence!

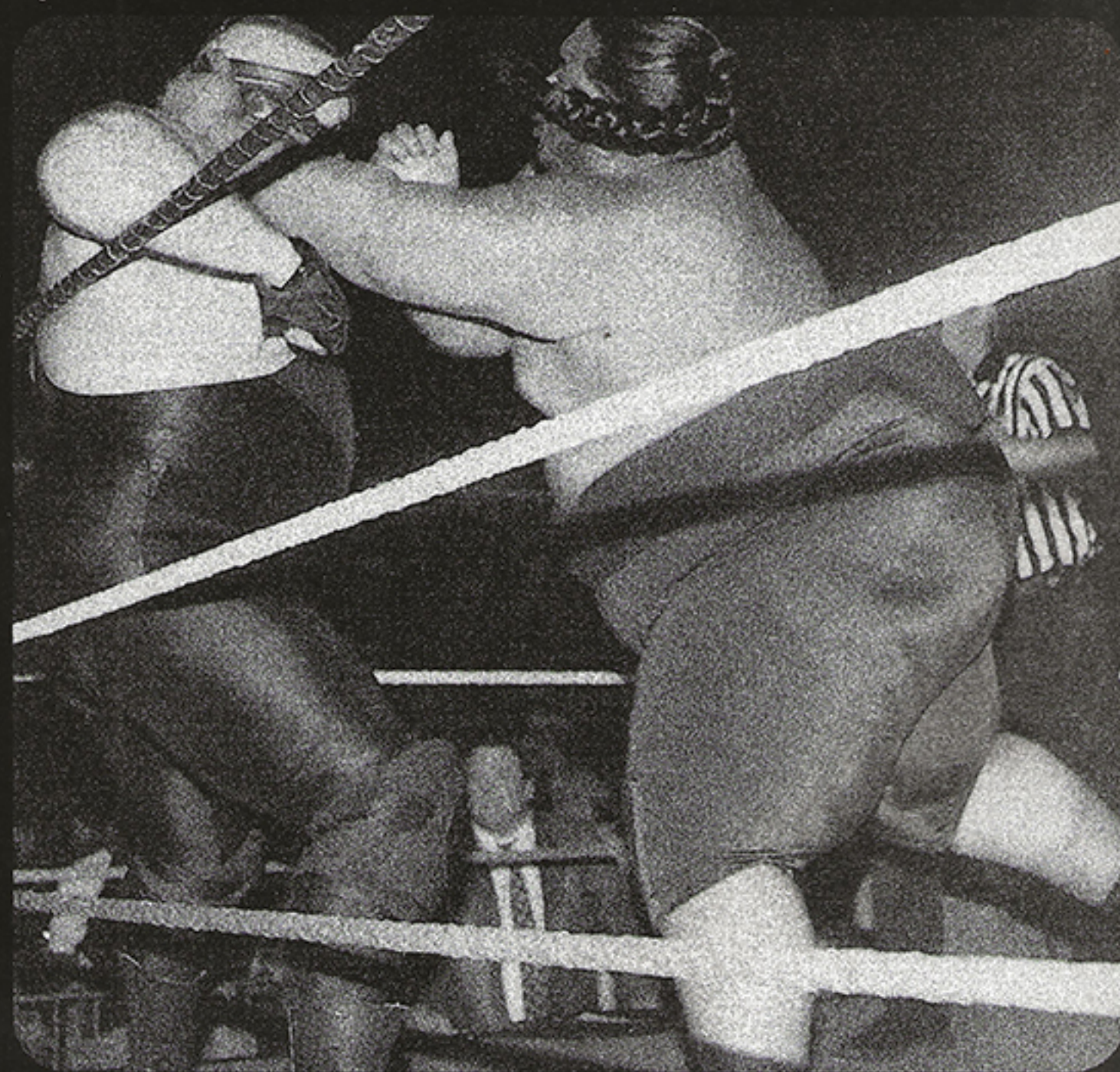
That night in the pitch black, Vader battled the master of the Banzai Drop, Yokozuna. Not many people know that

Yokozuna pinned Vader's shoulders to the mat that night... but in the mind of Cornette himself, the deck was stacked against Vader from the opening bell. Was it because Vader wasn't trained to see in the dark? Maybe it was because Yoko had more than a month out of the ring to rest. Cornette has a more "historical" outlook on it.



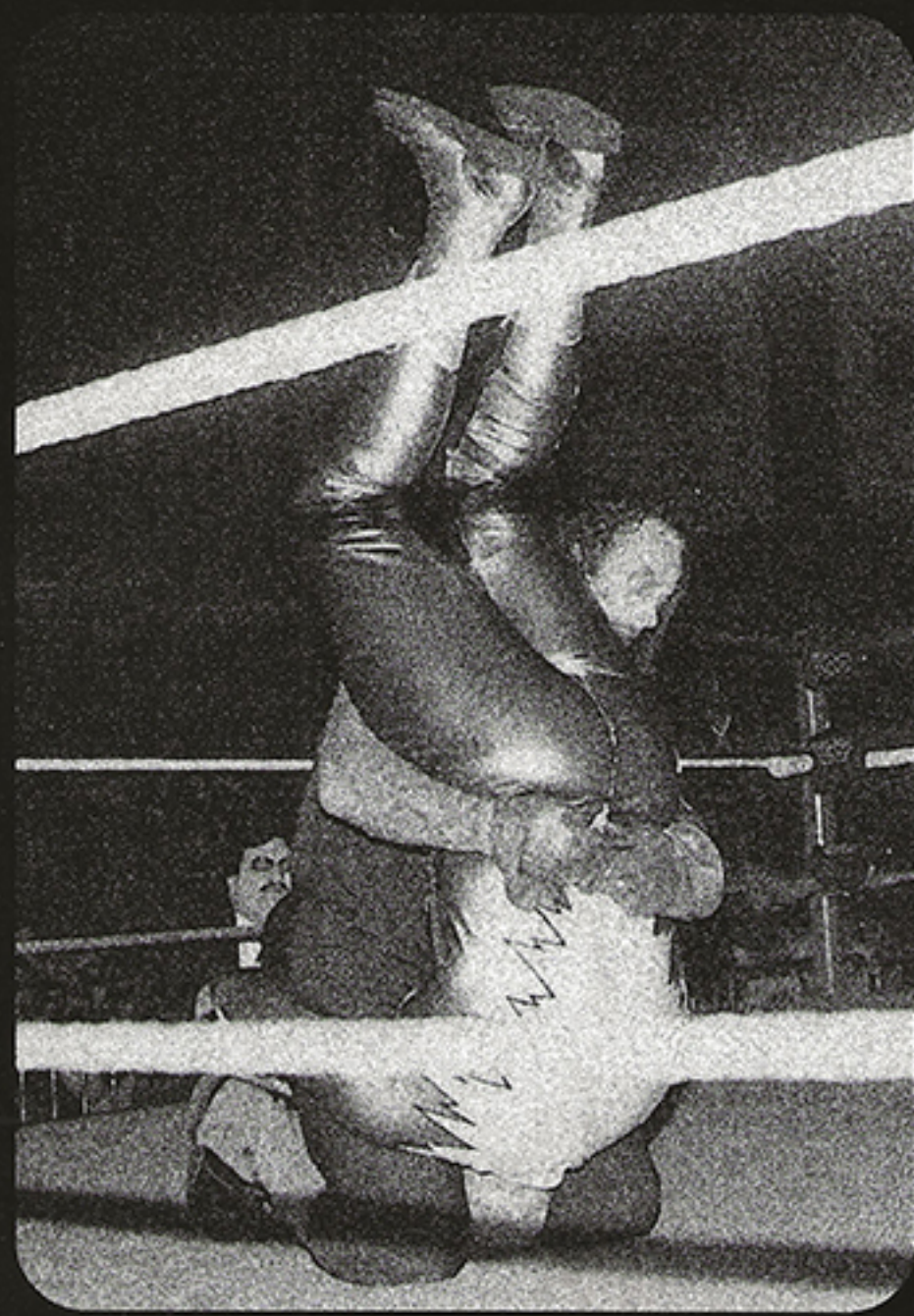
"Everyone knows the Japanese have great vision in the dark," Cornette said. "You may think Pearl Harbor happened during the day, but let me tell you something, the books are ALL wrong! My grandpappy told me that it happened in the dark, a fact very few people know! The government covered up this fact! That stinkin' Yokozuna had every advantage over Vader in the dark!"

And as much as we would like to dispute that fact, Cornette may have a point. Clearly, because the match only lasted about 10 minutes, you could tell that Vader was having a hard time seeing in the dark. While on the outside, he kept tugging at the muzzle on his head... was it making it that much more difficult for him to see? Yokozuna, on the other hand, was bouncing off the ropes like a cat. He had no problem seeing where he was going in the ring. Vader tried to counter with a barrage of fists, but it wasn't enough. Yokozuna threw Vader over the top rope, let him back in and then finished off the Rocky Mountain monster with a backdrop.



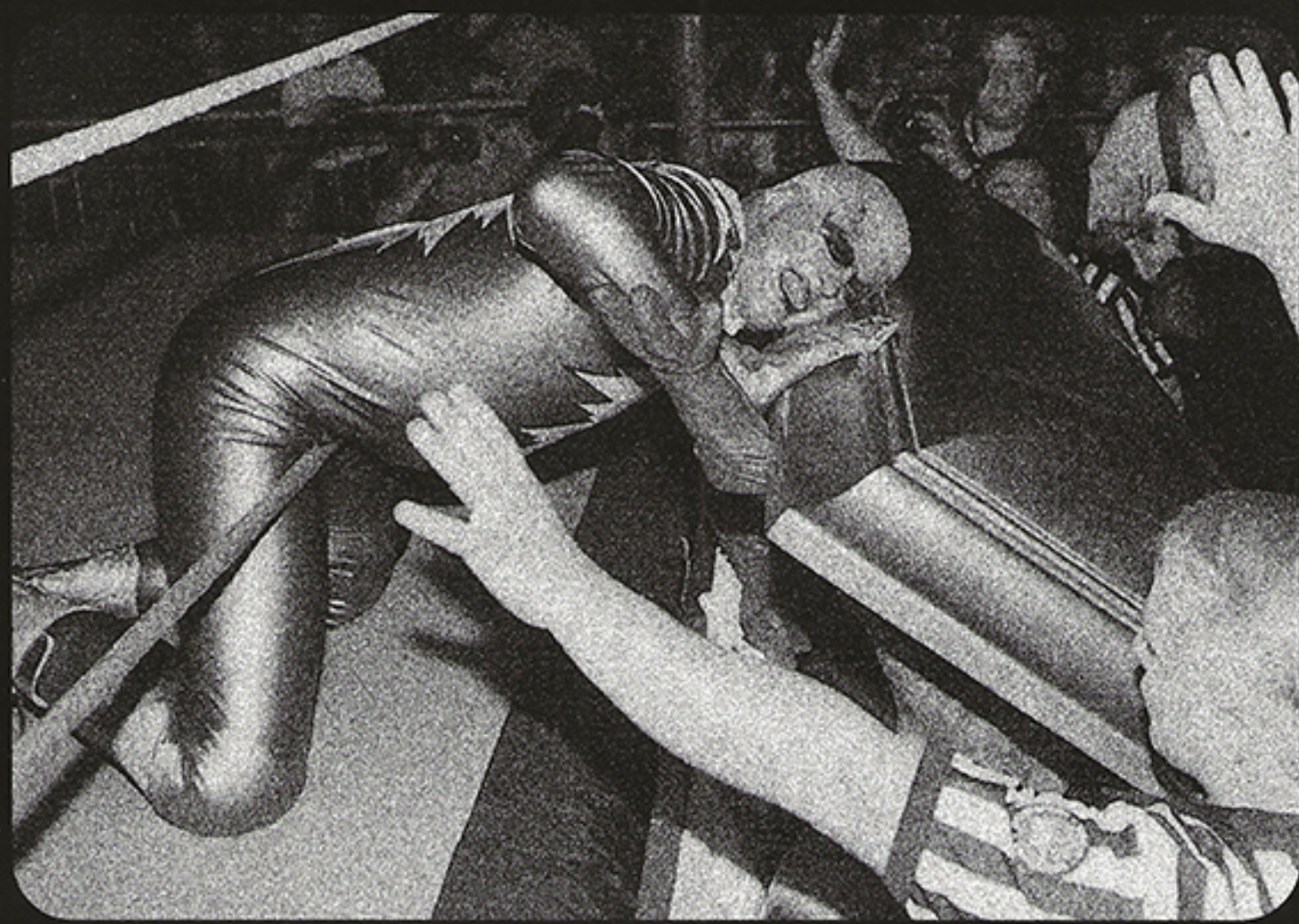
No one can dispute that Yokozuna was indeed well-rested that night. Having been out of the ring for an entire month because his leg was broken, Yokozuna didn't have to spend an entire month traveling like Vader did. I don't care how big and tough Vader is—a month on the road for a 450-pound man can zap all the energy out of you.

We may not like what Jim Cornette has to say about Yokozuna, but in all fairness, he states some interesting points. The fact is that Vader had trouble seeing in the dark and Yokozuna's well-rested body put Vader's shoulders to the mat for the 1-2-3!

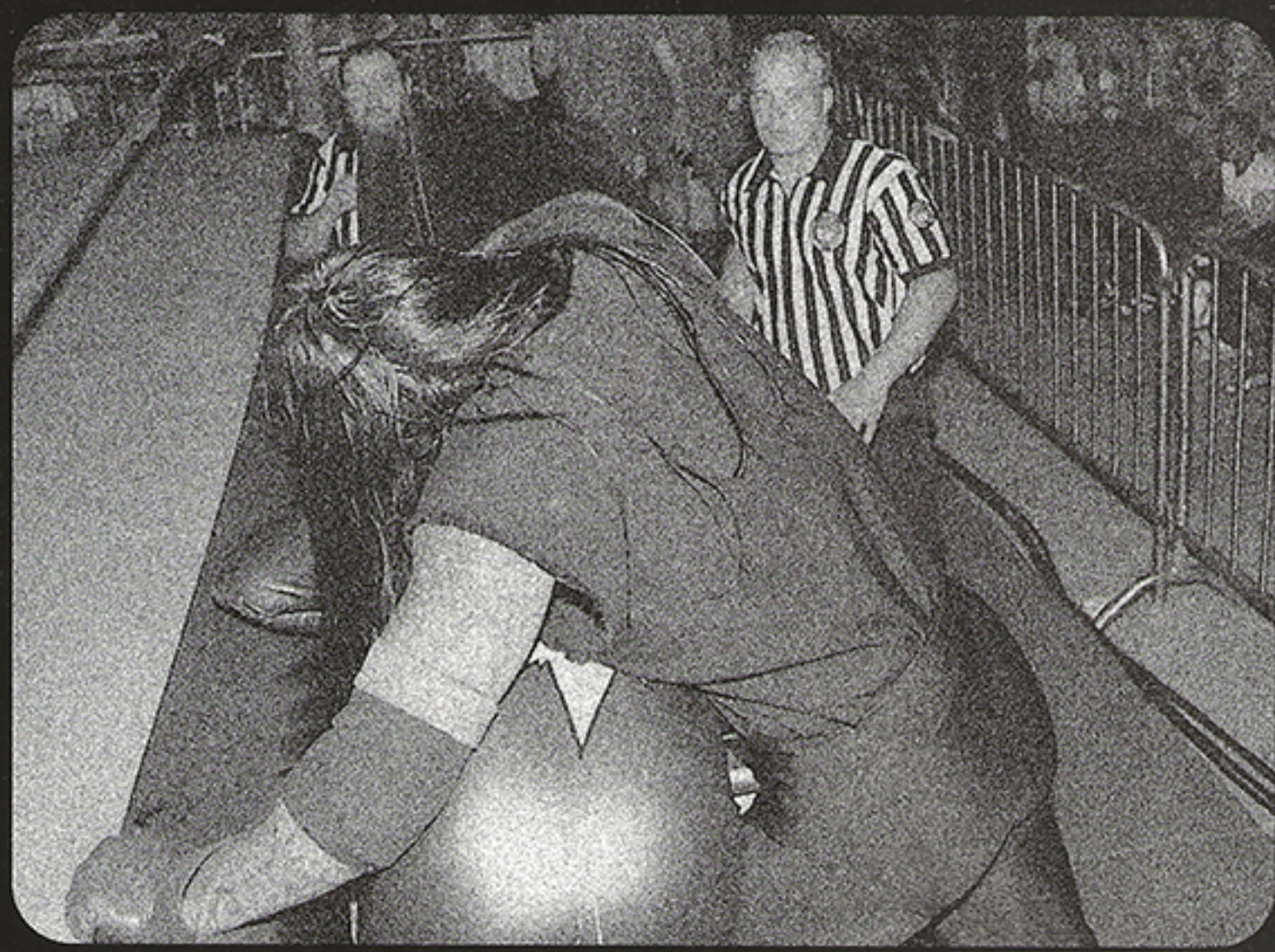


The final match to take place in the dark that night was for the Intercontinental Championship. But this wasn't going to any normal match—a giant oak casket was going to decide who would be the champ after the match was over. It was the Undertaker vs. Goldust, a match that would be fought with the lights off. You would think that the darkness of Florence would be the perfect environment for the Grim Reaper to destroy the Golden One. Well, it almost happened... but thanks to five other Federation superstars, the Undertaker was the one who got buried that night.

The Undertaker did everything but destroy Goldust that night in the dark. If you were inside the Civic Center, you saw how the Undertaker took everything Goldust could dish out, only to punish him 10 times worse. Countless times, both the champion and the challenger went to the outside of the ring to pummel one another on the ring steps and the railing. After a flurry of clotheslines and kicks to the stomach, Goldust was wearing down. Back inside the ring, the Grim Reaper had seen enough of Goldust. One chokeslam and a Tombstone piledriver later, the actor was sure to be lying face down in the casket—but like a bad flashback, the Undertaker was about to relive a horrifying night from his past two years ago.



Back in January 1994, the Undertaker had his sights set on winning the Federation Title in a Casket Match. This night would prove to be the first time Paul Bearer would see his man locked inside his own casket. As the Undertaker was putting the finishing touches on Yokozuna, out from the locker room came 10 Federation superstars. Every opportunistic vulture in the Federation who wanted

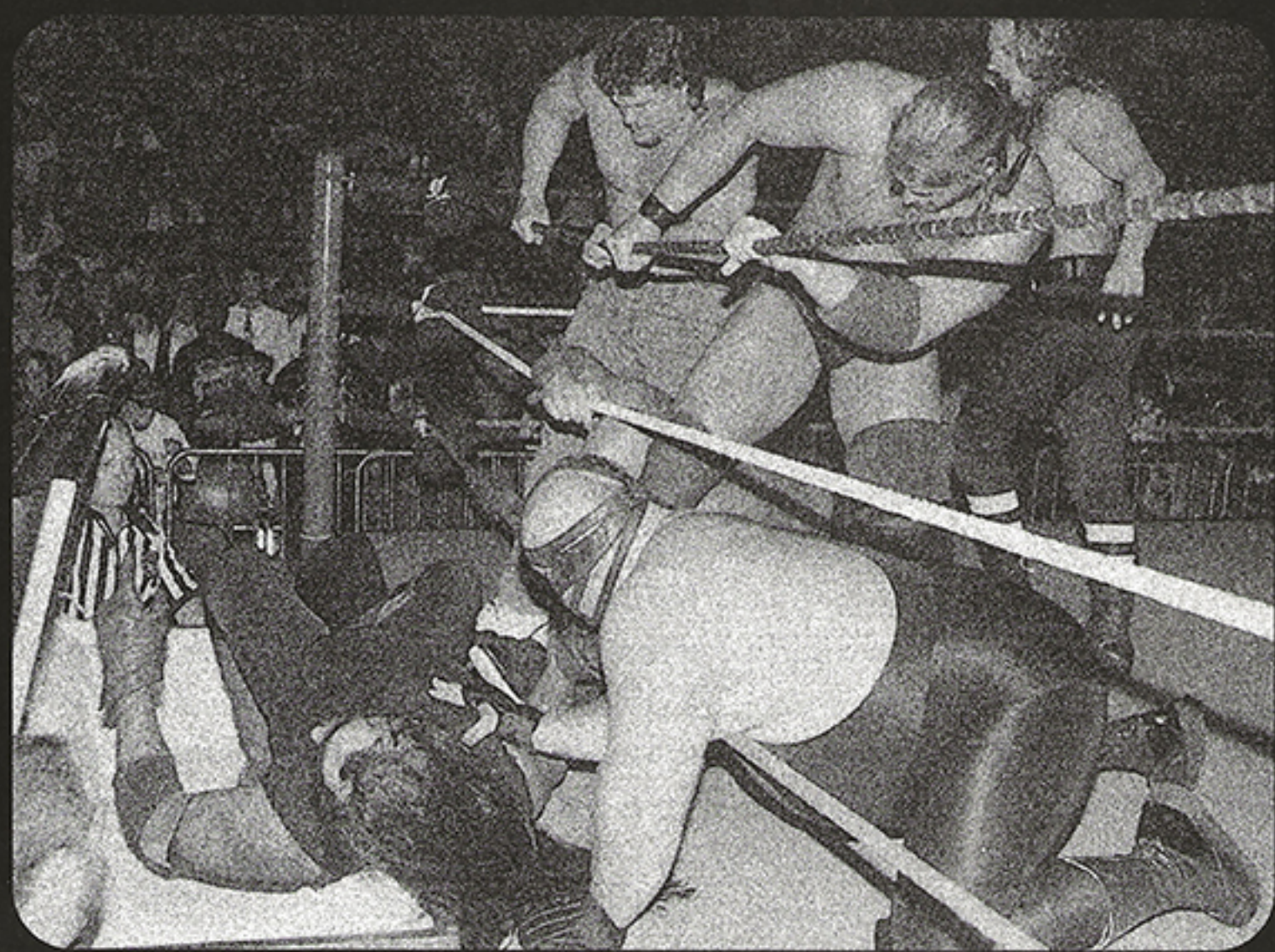


a crack at the Grim Reaper's bones hovered over him and savagely beat him until he was locked in his casket.... where he rested in peace for months.

Now the same thing was happening to the Grim Reaper in the dark of Florence. As the Undertaker was about to roll Goldust into the casket and slam the door shut, Vader, Hunter Hearst-Helmsley, Isaac Yankem D.D.S, Justin "Hawk" Bradshaw and Stone Cold Steve Austin saw to it that there would be no new Intercontinental Champion that night. Stuffing him inside the casket, the Undertaker saw the same darkness he witnessed two years ago at the Royal Rumble. One must wonder... was this all directed by Marlena from the very beginning? Had Marlena seen the Grim Reaper's weakness by watching and studying the events as they unfolded at the 1994 Royal Rumble?

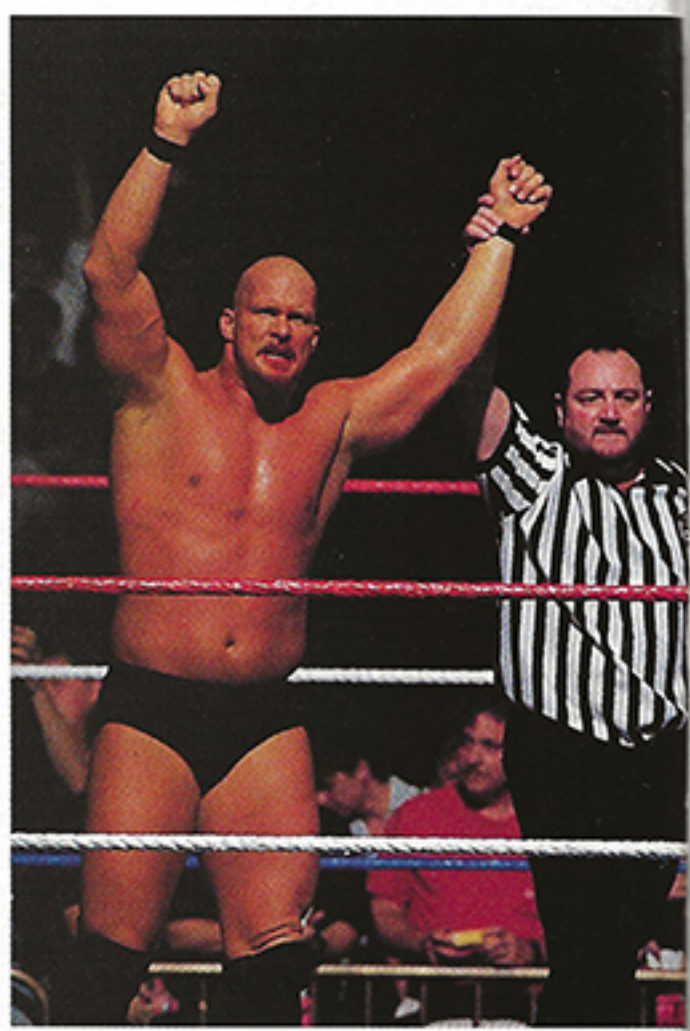
Whether you are alive or dead, there was no way the Undertaker was going to get back up from the beating of these five men after a 20-minute war with Goldust. For only the second time in his career that night, the Undertaker was put inside his own casket.

Many people have heard the story of the Lost City of Atlantis. Countless tales have been told about the lost Holy Grail. Now the story of the Lost In Your House matches can be told. That night, only a select handful of people actually witnessed what happened in the dark. The lights may have come back on in time to see Shawn Michaels and the British Bulldog battle, but for much of the evening the world was in the dark. Vicki Lawrence let the lights go out in Georgia 26 years ago... but because of the World Wrestling Federation, South Carolina will be singing a different tune for many years to come. ■



By Keith Elliot Greenberg

stone cold king: The Saga of Steve Austin



Once, in the days before he entered the World Wrestling Federation, he was known as Stunning Steve Austin. The name came out of the imagination of a public relations professional, based on the wrestler's platinum locks and surfer-boy looks. Austin went along with the moniker grudgingly, tormenting opponents with a ruthlessness that didn't suit his pre-packaged image.

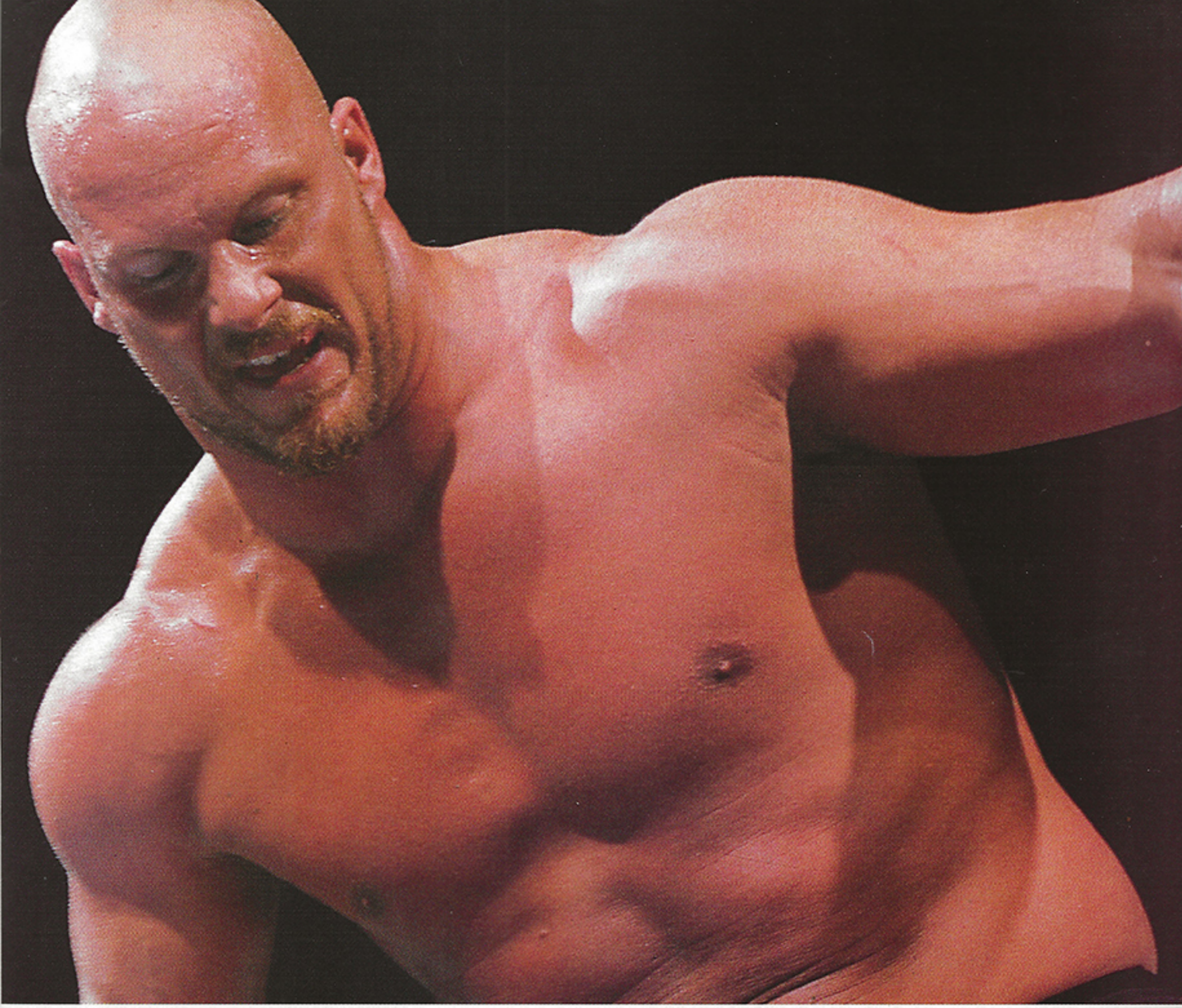
He remembers that time with more than a hint of bitterness. "'Stunning' is fine if you're a male model," he sneers, his golden strands shorn and wholesome features contorted by a mixture of inner demons and time spent in sweat-soaked gymnasiums. "But I'm a wrestler. There's nothing stunning about twisting a man's limbs until they pop, rubbing your knuckles against bare flesh, walking up those ring steps when your body's still aching from the beating you took the night before. To make it in the World Wrestling Federation, you have to have a stone cold heart. 'Cause when the curtain comes down, and you're too banged up to wrestle another day, 'stunning' won't get you a bus ticket home."

Today, the Steve Austin fans see on television is the Steve Austin wrestlers know in the dressing room... the Steve Austin who comes to the ring to fight and—win or lose—goes home with his opponent wondering what makes this guy so angry.

This past June, Austin proved to a skeptical public that he was the real deal, bulldozing his way through the rigorous King of the Ring tournament, then vanquishing the dynamic Marc Mero and legendary Jake "The Snake" Roberts in the finals.

"I don't like the man too much," offers Savio Vega, the rough-and-tumble street fighter from the South Bronx who's been tangling with the Stone Cold brawler on and off for the last several months. "But there's something about him I have to respect. He's not in the World Wrestling Federation because he wants the glory. He's not in the World Wrestling Federation because he likes the money. He's not in the World Wrestling Federation because he thinks it'll get him into the movies. He's in the World Wrestling Federation because he likes to bang heads. And I'm the perfect guy to bang his head right back."

Fans who watched the May In Your House pay-per-view vividly remember the headbanging brawl between Vega and Austin. The two went after each other in a Caribbean Strap Match. The rules stipulated that each man would be bound to the other by a leather strap. The winner would have to tie up his adversary, then drag him to all four

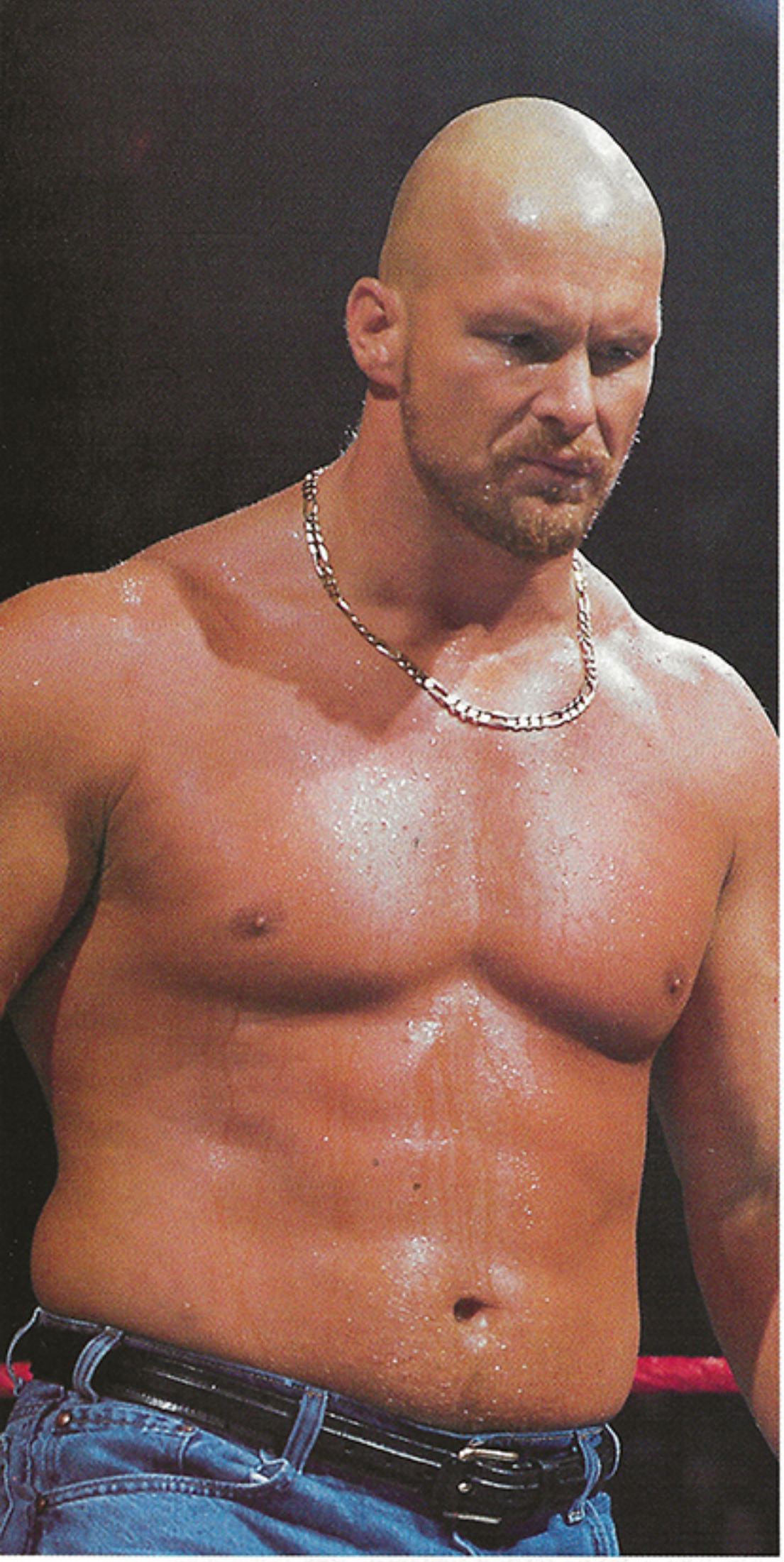


corners of the ring. And—even though Savio was more experienced at this type of battle—Austin was touted to take the contest. In fact, Stone Cold Steve was so confident that his manager, Ted DiBiase, vowed to leave the World Wrestling Federation if Vega emerged triumphant.

Near the end of the skirmish, Austin had Savio just where he wanted the popular Puerto Rican to be. Vega was on his knees and being pulled from one turnbuckle to the next. What Austin didn't realize was that Vega was also touching the corners, planning to turn the tide on his opponent at the last moment. After the third buckle was passed, Savio decided to engage his foe in a tug of war. Austin yanked on the strap—and Vega flew into the fourth turnbuckle, making contact with it to earn the victory.

As a result, DiBiase—the man who first recruited Austin into the World Wrestling Federation and taught him a lethal variation of the sleeperhold—was exiled to the lower reaches of the mat wars.

"I was pretty mad," Austin admits. "I mean, I kicked Savio's butt, and he cheated me out of a win. And now I didn't have a manager. But you wanna know something? I didn't need Ted DiBiase. He made this big deal out of himself, like he's the one who taught me all his wisdom. If it wasn't for him, he liked to say, I'd be wrestling in some little cow town, pining for the days when my name would be on the marquee in the World Wrestling Federation. Well, he's the one who belongs in the cow town. I'd be in the World Wrestling Federation today even if Ted DiBiase was never born. That's where I belong—in the middle of the ring, with



the referee raising my hand. And everybody else better just stand back and accept the cruel truth."

Austin has been making waves with such frank comments since his first wrestling match in the now-defunct World Class Championship Wrestling promotion, based in Dallas. Once, World Class Championship Wrestling had been an internationally acclaimed territory. The Von Erich brothers were the group's stars, packing in fans at the Dallas Sportatorium. But by the time Austin arrived, the gravy days were over. World Class Championship Wrestling was a shadow of its former self, and Austin wasn't too happy about it.

"If I wanted to play in the minors," he said, "I would've picked baseball."

Soon, World Class Championship Wrestling went out of business, and Austin moved to another southern promotion, World Championship Wrestling.

This is where the Stone Cold grappler was given the label "Stunning Steve." To add insult to injury, he and Brian Pillman, another no-nonsense ruffian, were paired up and christened the Hollywood Blonds. The front-office staff may have seen them as pretty boys, but Austin and Pillman were down-and-dirty scrappers, pinching the territory's tag team belts from Rick Steamboat and Shane Douglas on March 3, 1993.

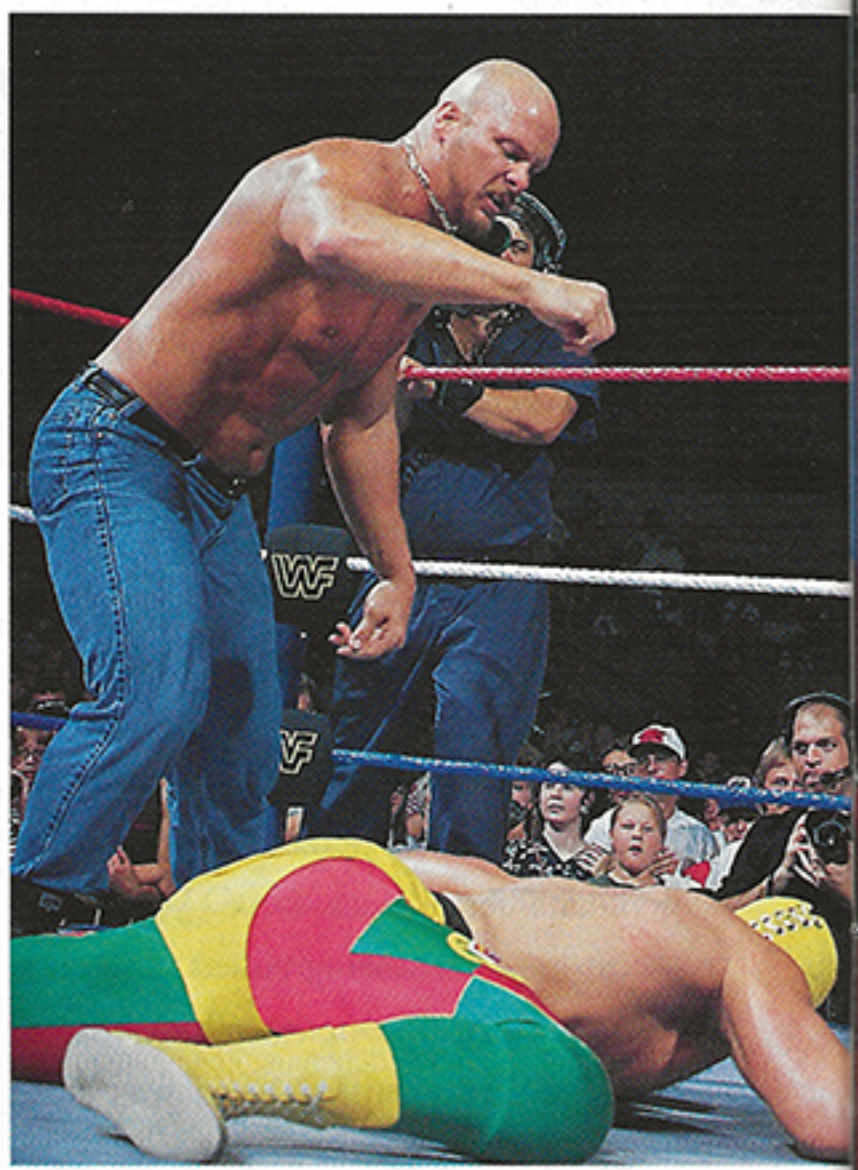
Striking out on his own as a singles competitor, Austin won the group's U.S. title on two occasions—from Dustin Rhodes on Dec. 27, 1993, and from Steamboat—via forfeit—on Sept. 18, 1994.

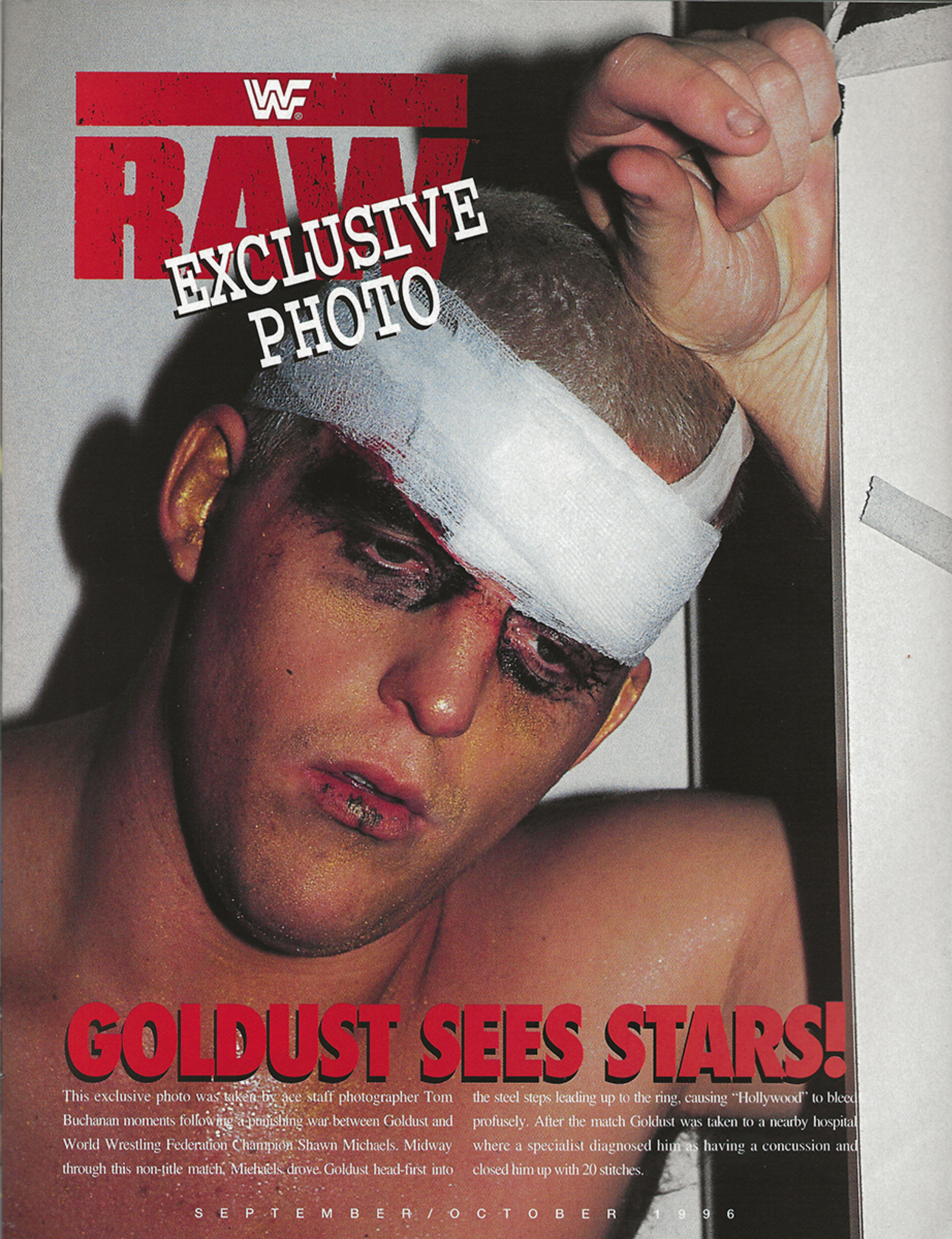
True, he was arrogant. But he was also a gifted competitor who, time and again, overshadowed his fellow World Championship Wrestling performers. He claims that the powers that be in the territory overlooked his assets, keeping him out of the spotlight for political reasons. This was no way to gratify a wrestler who already had a large chip on his shoulder. And, earlier this year, he finally fought his way into the majors, debuting in the World Wrestling Federation.

In an organization spilling over with noteworthy newcomers, Austin rose to the top. Mere months after his first World Wrestling Federation card, Austin wasn't just a main eventer—he was King of the Ring.

To say he's found contentment would be a fallacy. To put it bluntly, Austin is a bitter man and probably wouldn't be happy anywhere. But at least he's being matched against opponents of comparable aptitude, and nobody in a suit and tie has attempted to suppress his Stone Cold nature. Now, with DiBiase gone, Austin is fully in control of his career. Whether he thrives or fails is a matter of his own skill and determination.

His future achievements may be exacting, spectacular and dramatic. But Austin swears they'll never be stunning. ■





GOLDUST SEES STARS!

This exclusive photo was taken by ace staff photographer Tom Buchanan moments following a punishing war between Goldust and World Wrestling Federation Champion Shawn Michaels. Midway through this non-title match, Michaels drove Goldust head-first into the steel steps leading up to the ring, causing "Hollywood" to bleed profusely. After the match Goldust was taken to a nearby hospital where a specialist diagnosed him as having a concussion and closed him up with 20 stitches.

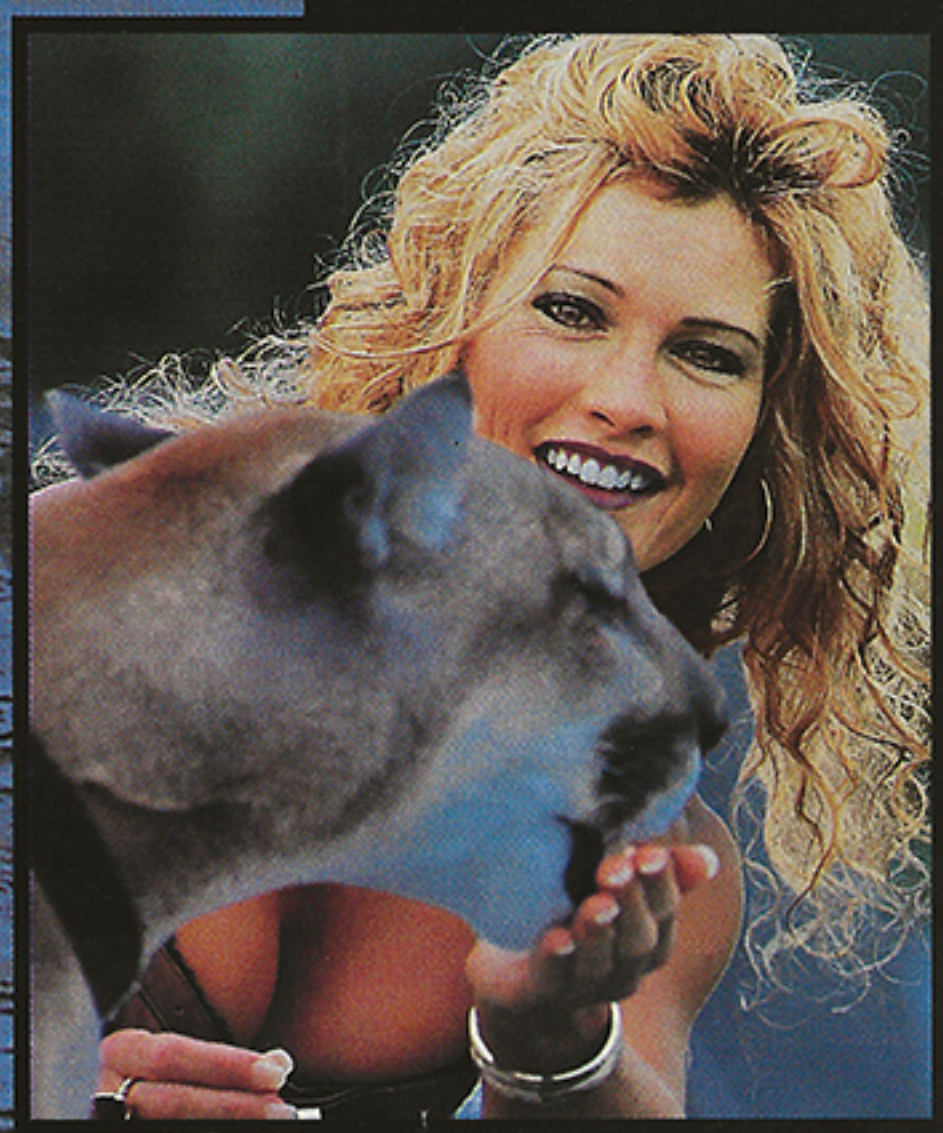
Welcome To

ভিনদেশ

I am a woman who loves a challenge and the energy that I feel from the Wildman!

I like to be treated with respect; if you act like a lady, then you will be treated as one.

I represent a lady very much in control of her own life. A strong woman that stands up for what she believes in who stays focused and is not afraid to be herself. A woman who strives to be her best and always thinks positively.



WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION'S

WF RAW

CENTERFOLD

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Superstar Fact Sheet

NAME: Sable HEIGHT: 5' 6"

WEIGHT: 118 lbs.

BIRTH DATE: August 8th

BIRTHPLACE: Florida

AMBITION: To be manager of the WWF Champion. I know the Wildman has what it takes to get us there.

TURN-ONS: A man who is self-assured and knows where he is going.

TURNOFFS: Someone who is rude or mean and has no self-esteem

WHY I LOVE THE WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION: I'm proud to be associated with such a fine organization and to have the opportunity to travel the world, meeting so many wonderful people.

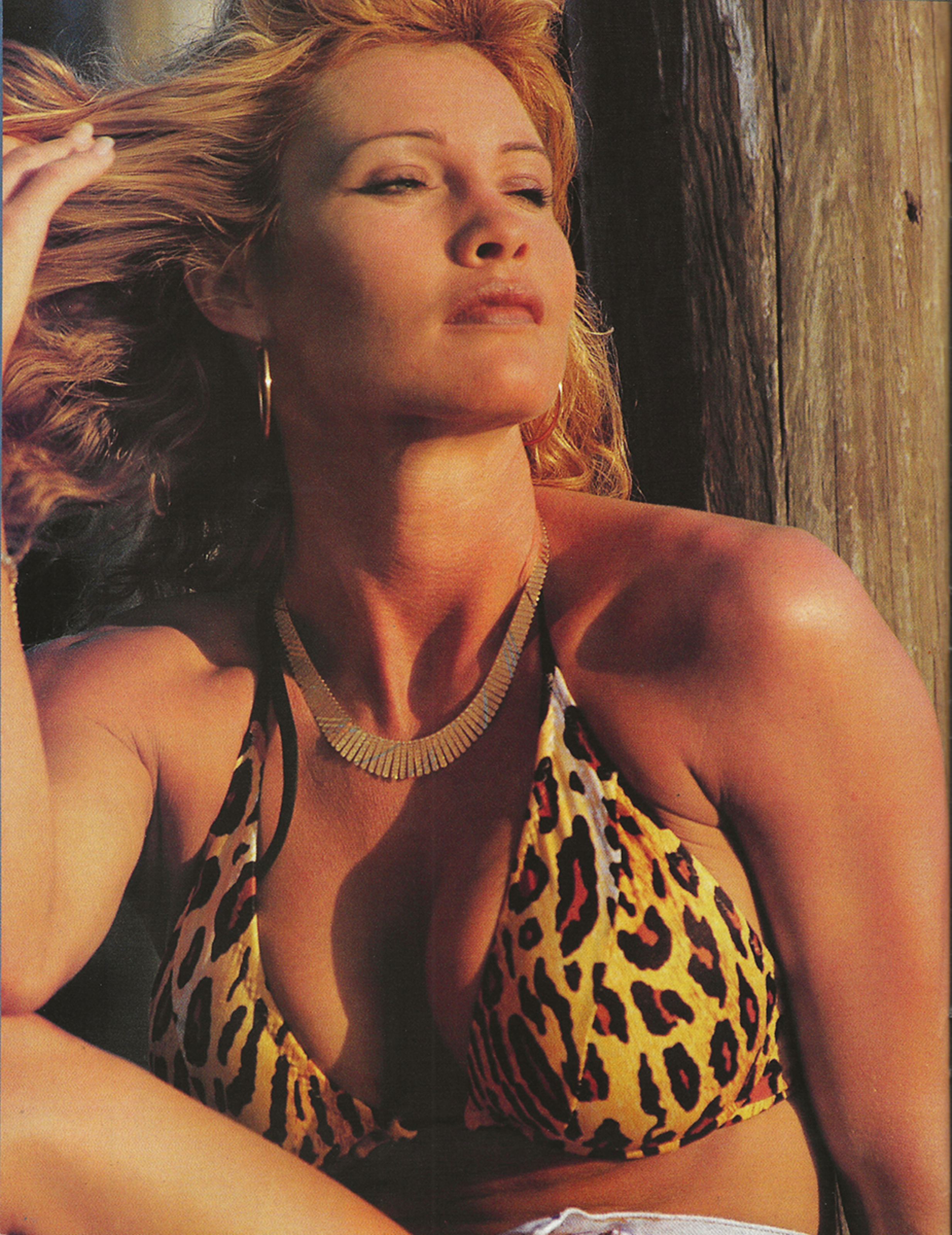
FAVORITE SUBJECTS: Training; I train to stay in the best shape possible, but my all-time favorite would be the Wildman!

FAVORITE BOYS' NAMES: Why, Marc, of course!

WHAT I FALL ASLEEP TO: I love to cuddle, nice long bubble bath followed by a great body massage. That would really make me purr!

Sable

Sable relaxing... and taking a walk on the wild side!



Women have come so far. I feel it is a personal choice. I would like to see women set goals for themselves and be wherever they choose to be in life. Life is what you make of it, you get out of it and what you put into it.

STRI-DEX® presents WWF® WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION®

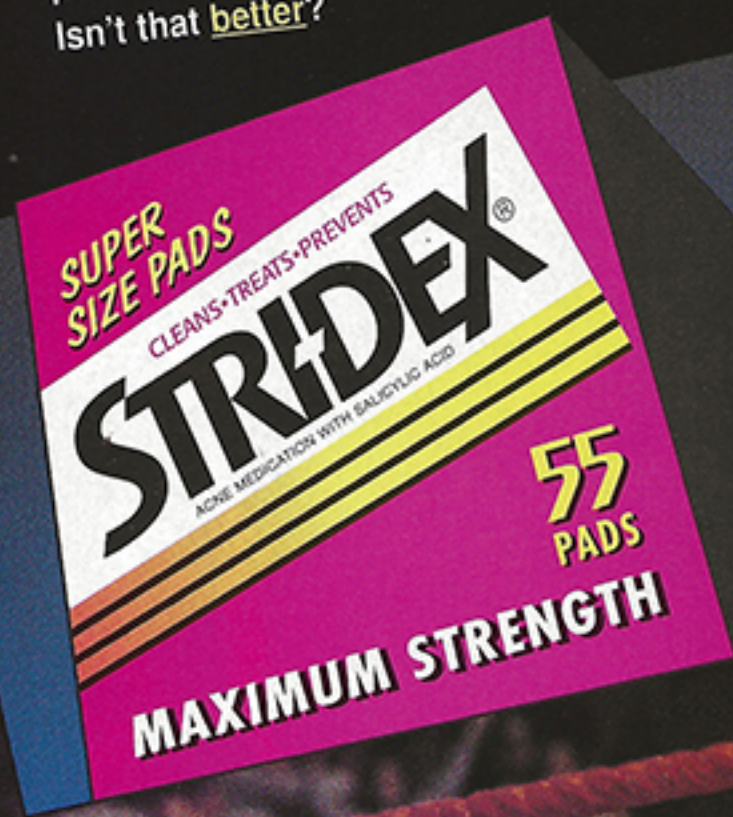
SUMMERSLAM®

BIGGER IS BETTER!

"Now that I am the World Wrestling Federation Champion, that makes me the biggest superstar in the world...and everybody knows bigger is better!"

Shawn Michaels
World Wrestling Federation Champion

And when it comes to acne pads, nothing is bigger than super-size Stri-Dex. And nothing without a prescription is stronger! Isn't that better?



STRI-DEX PRESENTS WWF SUMMERSLAM!
Sunday, August 18th. Live on Pay-Per-View.

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Enter the Stri-Dex/ World Wrestling Federation® Sweepstakes!

STRIDEX® presents WF® WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION®

SUMMERSLAM® SWEEPSTAKES

GRAND PRIZE* - A trip for four to a World Wrestling Federation® Pay-Per-View event!

5 FIRST PRIZES - World Wrestling Federation® Pay-Per-View event subscription at home! (Refund by Mail)

50 SECOND PRIZES - Custom World Wrestling Federation® T-Shirt!

50 THIRD PRIZES - World Wrestling Federation® SummerSlam® Poster!

* Prize structure: This prize list represents one drawing. There will be 10 drawings in total, one national drawing and nine regional drawings. See rules for locations and details.

No purchase necessary. Entry forms are available at these participating stores:

PHAR-MOR	Fred Meyer	heinen's fine foods	Stop 'n Shop Supermarkets
MARC'S Fun for your money!	DAVE'S SUPER MARKETS	medic discount drugstores	REIDER'S
ACME Acme Super Center Acme Express	Discount drug mart	H-E-B	Finast®

See back of entry form for rules, regulations, and details. Sweepstakes limited to U.S. residents, age 14 years of age and older. If no forms are available, you can enter the Sweepstakes by mailing your name, age, address and telephone number on a 3x5 index card to:

Stri-Dex/World Wrestling Federation® SummerSlam® Sweepstakes,
P.O. Box 887, White Plains, NY 10604.

(All entries must be postmarked by September 30, 1996.)

If you'd like a copy of the rules, and none are available at the nearest participating retailer, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope (VT and WA residents may omit stamp) to the above address.

Check out SummerSlam® and the SummerSlam® Sweepstakes on the World Wrestling Federation® home page on American On-Line® from July 22nd to September 1st.

Remember Stri-Dex. And you could be a big winner!

LOOKING BACK - TRAGEDY

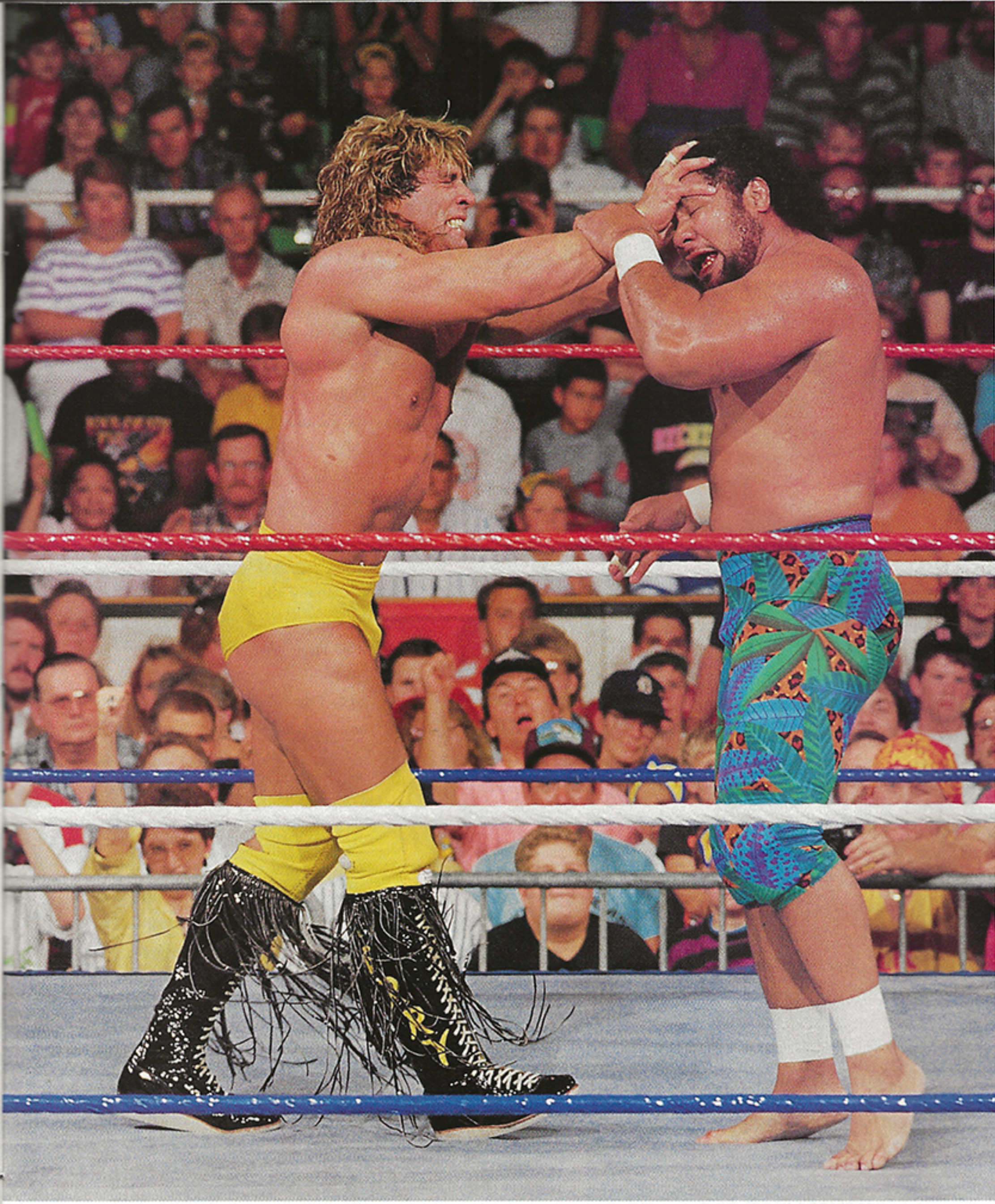
The Story of

"The Texas Tornado" Kerry Von Erich

To most people who met him, Kerry Von Erich seemed to be leading a charmed life. Blessed with a magnificent physique, superb athletic ability and matinee idol good looks, the "Texas Tornado" was born with gifts elusive to the average person.

In the ring, he won the World Wrestling Federation Intercontinental Title from Mr. Perfect. Away from the arena, he was a gracious spokesperson for the sport of kings, charming celebrities and politicians with his soft-spoken modesty, lecturing youngsters about the importance of a good education, speaking out about his own relationship with the Lord in churches as well as on television shows, using his own personal time to telephone terminally ill children and offer them words of encouragement.

By Keith Elliot Greenberg



Once, in New York, he was walking down Seventh Avenue across the street from Madison Square Garden when he noticed a man snatching a woman's purse. Foolishly, the robber ran toward Kerry, and the Texas Tornado simply extended his tree trunk of a forearm and clotheslined him. Perching himself squarely on top of the groggy criminal, Von Erich asked the astonished witnesses to call police. Then he handed the pocketbook back to the woman and said, with almost childlike sincerity, "Sorry for your trouble, ma'am."

That was the Kerry the public saw—

big and tough, but kind-hearted and concerned for others. "He's a fine young man," people would say. And, to a large degree, they were right.

Unfortunately, there was another side to Kerry Von Erich. Despite his youth and success, he was haunted by bitter memories caused by the deaths of four of his six brothers. In 1993, at just 33 years old, he left the trials of the mat forever, joining the brothers he so desperately missed.

That was the Kerry the public saw—big and tough, but kind-hearted and concerned for others... to a large degree, they were right.

It wasn't supposed to be this way. Kerry, after all, was the son of the great Fritz Von Erich, the master of the "iron claw"—a hold that consisted of placing one of his big paws on an opponent's face and squeezing the temples until the man submitted. Fritz trained his sons in the ways of the ring, hoping they'd rule the mat wars one day. But very early on, tragedy struck.

In 1959, the oldest child, Jack, then just 6 years old, touched a live wire in the middle of a storm. The boy was jolted unconscious and fell into a puddle, where he drowned. Jack's absence would forever be felt at family gatherings, but the family tried to move on.

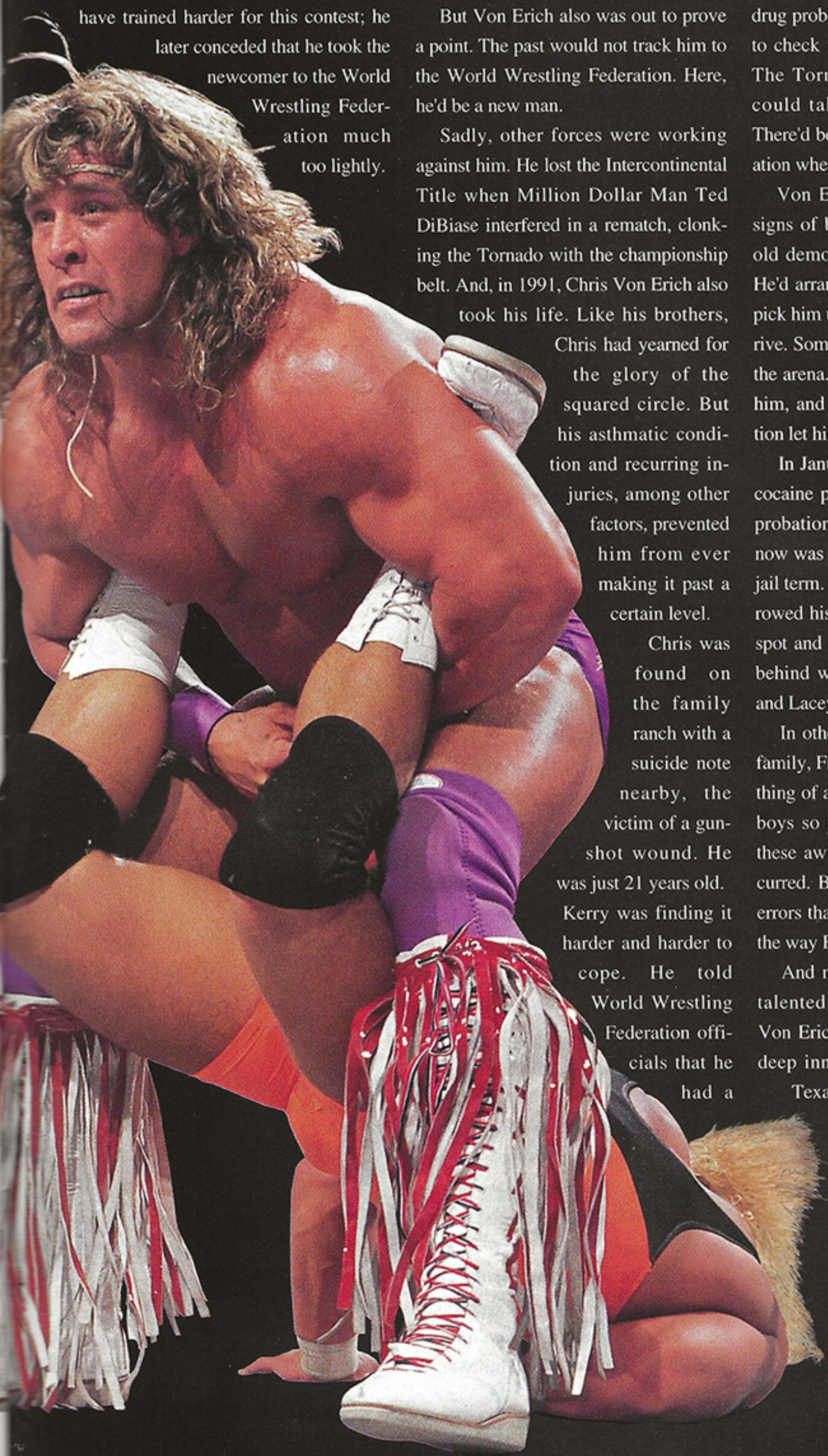
By the early 1980s, the Von Erichs were the first family of Texas wrestling. Fritz was running the now-defunct World Class Championship Wrestling promotion in Dallas, and his sons Kerry, Kevin, David and Mike were its stars. A younger son, Chris, watched the action from the stands, waiting for the day he'd grow up and stand beside his famous brothers between the ropes.

Then, in 1984, during a tour of Japan, David was found dead in his hotel room. The cause: a sudden inflammation of the intestines. Back in Texas, the Von Erichs were devastated by the news. But three months later, in front of an extremely partisan hometown crowd at Texas Stadium, Kerry beat Ric Flair for the old National Wrestling Alliance (NWA) title. The Texas Tornado told the media he'd won the belt for his brother. Still, some believe that, beneath the euphoria, Kerry was already dabbling in drugs to numb the pain.

Apparently, so was his brother Mike. In April, 1987, he overdosed on the drug placidyl, a drug used to battle depression. Kerry's emotions were frazzled. Tales of his substance abuse problems circulated around wrestling dressing rooms. But in 1990, he signed with the World Wrestling Federation, promising a fresh start. And Federation officials were more than willing to give him a chance. The Tornado was a gentleman, they concluded, and a fine wrestler. After all the misfortune he'd experienced, he deserved a break.

He got off to an incredible start, shocking the wrestling world by snaring the World Wrestling Federation Intercontinental Championship from Mr. Perfect at SummerSlam '90. Before Perfect could formulate an offense, Kerry smashed him with the Texas Tornado discus punch and covered him for the three-count. Perhaps Perfect should

Von Erich was out to prove a point. The past would not track him to the Federation. Here, he'd be a new man.



have trained harder for this contest; he later conceded that he took the newcomer to the World Wrestling Federation much too lightly.

But Von Erich also was out to prove a point. The past would not track him to the World Wrestling Federation. Here, he'd be a new man.

Sadly, other forces were working against him. He lost the Intercontinental Title when Million Dollar Man Ted DiBiase interfered in a rematch, clonking the Tornado with the championship belt. And, in 1991, Chris Von Erich also took his life. Like his brothers, Chris had yearned for the glory of the squared circle. But his asthmatic condition and recurring injuries, among other factors, prevented him from ever making it past a certain level.

Chris was found on the family ranch with a suicide note nearby, the victim of a gunshot wound. He was just 21 years old. Kerry was finding it harder and harder to cope. He told World Wrestling Federation officials that he had a drug problem, and they encouraged him to check into a rehabilitation program. The Tornado was reassured that he could take all the time he needed. There'd be a place for him in the Federation whenever he returned.

Von Erich did return, and showed signs of brilliance in the ring. But his old demons continued to follow him. He'd arrange for his fellow wrestlers to pick him up at the airport, then never arrive. Sometimes he wouldn't show up at the arena. Eventually, his wife divorced him, and the World Wrestling Federation let him go.

In January 1993, he was arrested for cocaine possession. He already was on probation for other drug charges, and now was facing the possibility of a long jail term. On February 18, 1993, he borrowed his father's jeep, drove to a quiet spot and shot himself in the chest. Left behind were his two daughters, Holly and Lacey.

In other stories about the Von Erich family, Fritz has been depicted as something of a villain. If he hadn't driven his boys so hard, some allege, maybe all these awful things would not have occurred. But no father, regardless of the errors that he's made, deserves to suffer the way Fritz Von Erich has.

And no person—particularly one as talented and good-natured as Kerry Von Erich—deserves to experience the deep inner torment that afflicted the Texas Tornado. ■

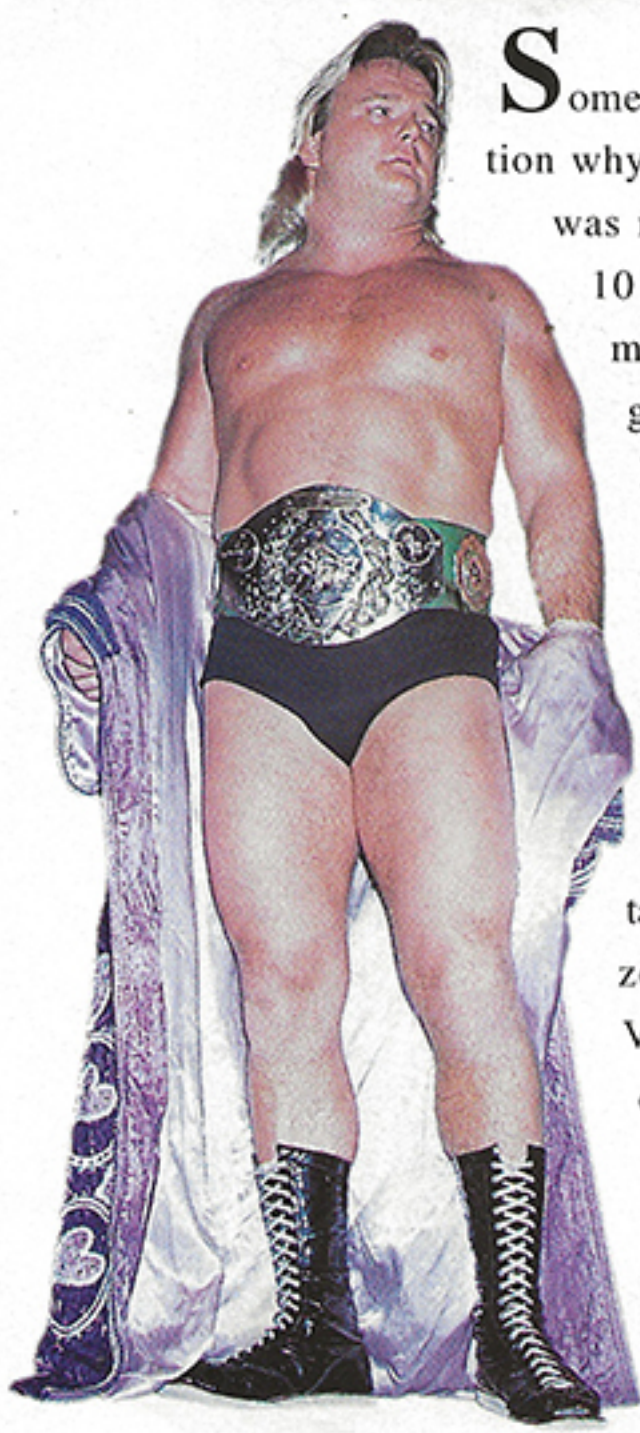
THE TEN GREATEST INTERCONTINENTAL CHAMPIONS OF ALL TIME

The World Wrestling Federation Intercontinental Belt was first captured by the legendary Pat Patterson in 1979 after a grueling tournament in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Since that time, it's been one of the most important championships in the sport of kings. Some have used the Intercontinental Title as a springboard to the World Wrestling Federation Championship. Others have concentrated only on the prestige of the belt, building their own status in the World Wrestling Federation while expanding the legacy of the strap.

When the editors of this publication sat down to argue over the 10 top Intercontinental Champions, emotions were heated. In some ways, the fraternity of Intercontinental titleholders boasts a more talented array of athletes than any other category. After all, Pedro Morales, Diesel, Rowdy Roddy Piper, Ravishing Rick Rude, Ricky "The Dragon" Steamboat, Goldust, the British Bulldog, Jeff Jarrett and "Texas Tornado" Kerry Von Erich have all worn the Intercontinental Belt—and those are the guys who didn't make the list!

By Keith Elliot Greenberg

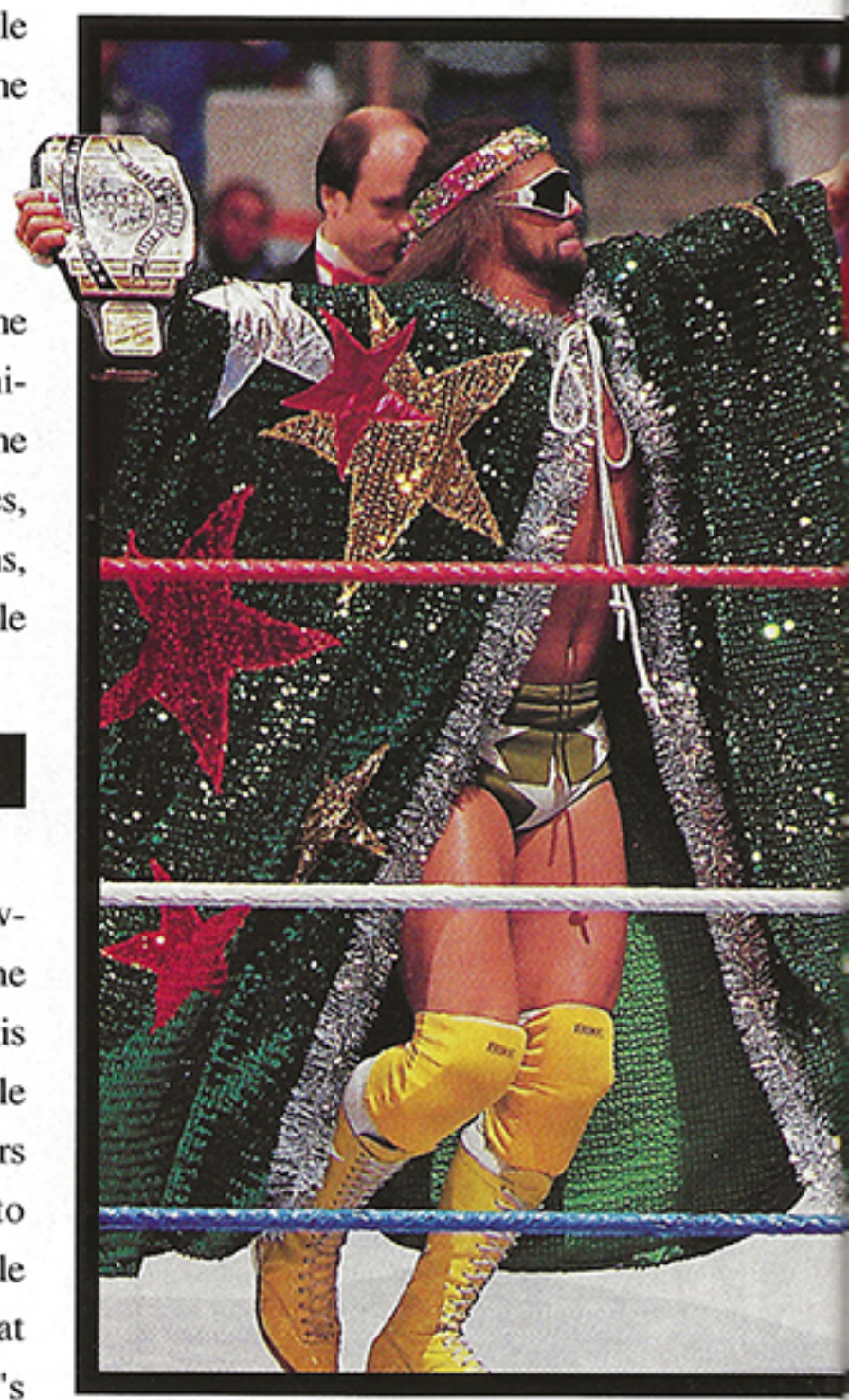
#10. GREG "THE HAMMER" VALENTINE

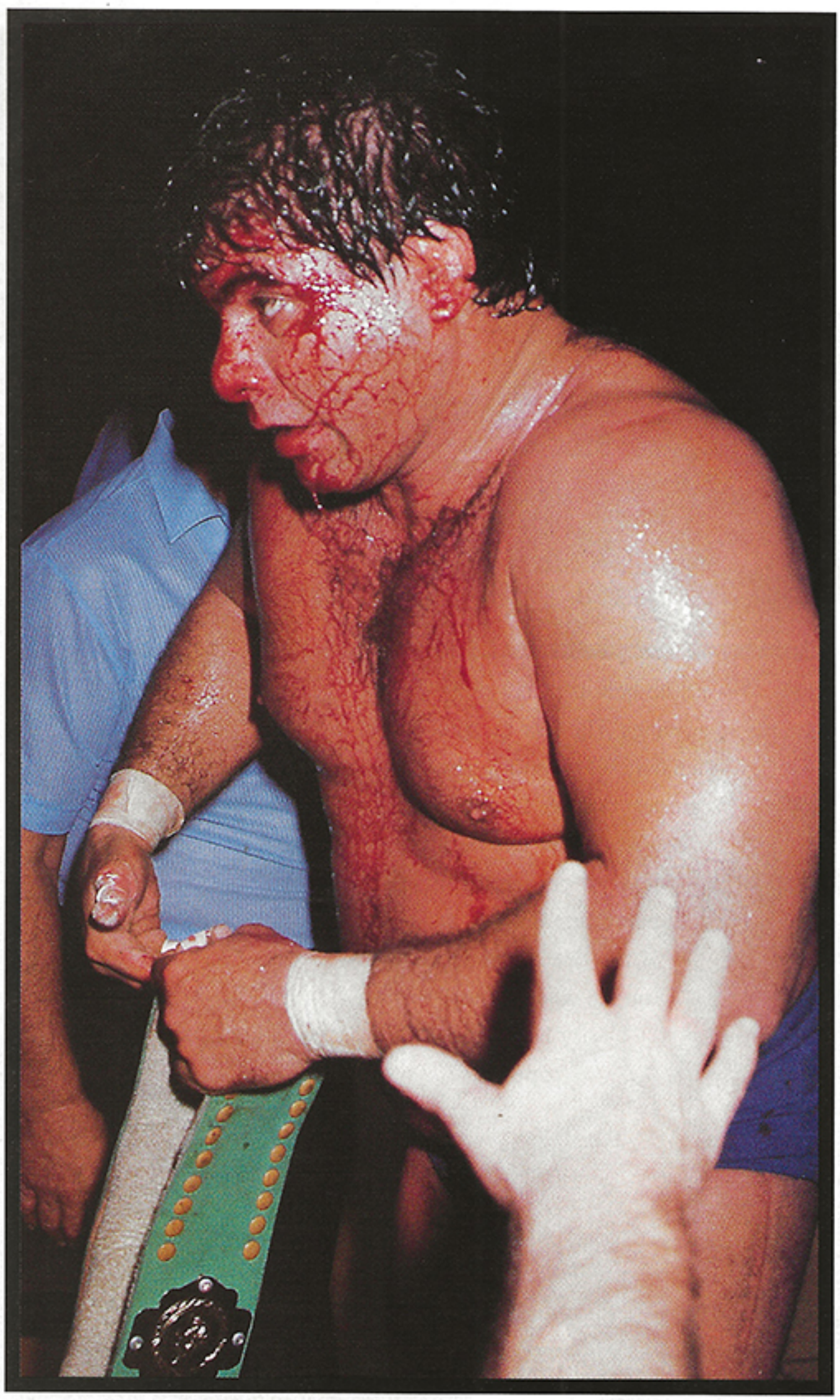


Some will question why Valentine was named No. 10 while so many other gifted athletes were left off of the roll. The reason is that, like Tito Santana and Razor Ramon, Valentine devoted a sizable chunk of his career to the Intercontinental crown, playing the role of both champion and challenger. In the early 1980s, when belts like the American Wrestling Association (AWA) and Missouri State Championships still existed, Valentine gave the Intercontinental Belt a unique prominence, positioning it far and above the other titles. He didn't play by the rules, nor was he particularly gracious to fans, but "The Hammer" cherished the title and embodied its merits.

#9. MACHO MAN RANDY SAVAGE

When did Macho Man Randy Savage's career reach its pinnacle? Some say it was in 1988 when he scored his first World Wrestling Federation Title win. And others insist it was two years earlier, when Savage surprised Tito Santana with a foreign object and stole the Intercontinental Belt from him at Boston Garden. The Macho Man's





method of victory was almost irrelevant. The fact was that Savage's momentum—"Macho Madness," as he called it—was soaring. And the Intercontinental victory only added to the energy. Savage's win transformed him from a rough and tumble daredevil to a mature athlete. Between the Santana upset and Savage's Intercontinental Title loss to Ricky "The Dragon" Steamboat at WrestleMania III, the Macho Man reconstructed himself into one of the leaders of the mat wars.

#8. DON "THE ROCK" MURACO

Known alternately as "The Rock" and "The Magnificent Muraco," this human volcano from the shores of Hawaii established himself in the early 1980s as the Intercontinental champ who wouldn't surrender his gem. In one encounter, he fought Jimmy "Superfly" Snuka in a cage at New York's Madison Square Garden. At a critical moment, the challenger hip-tossed the titlist out the door of the pen—earning Muraco the victory. Such close calls—and the heartiness the Magnificent One took into each title defense—allowed Muraco to squeeze out men like the British Bulldog, Ricky Steamboat, Pedro Morales and others who believe they belong on this list.

#7. BAD GUY RAZOR RAMON

Razor Ramon—Razor Ramon had many ups and downs during his storied career in the World Wrestling Federation—and most of them revolved around the Intercontinental Championship. Ramon, the Cuban "Bad Guy" from the streets of Havana and Miami, was the only four-time World Wrestling

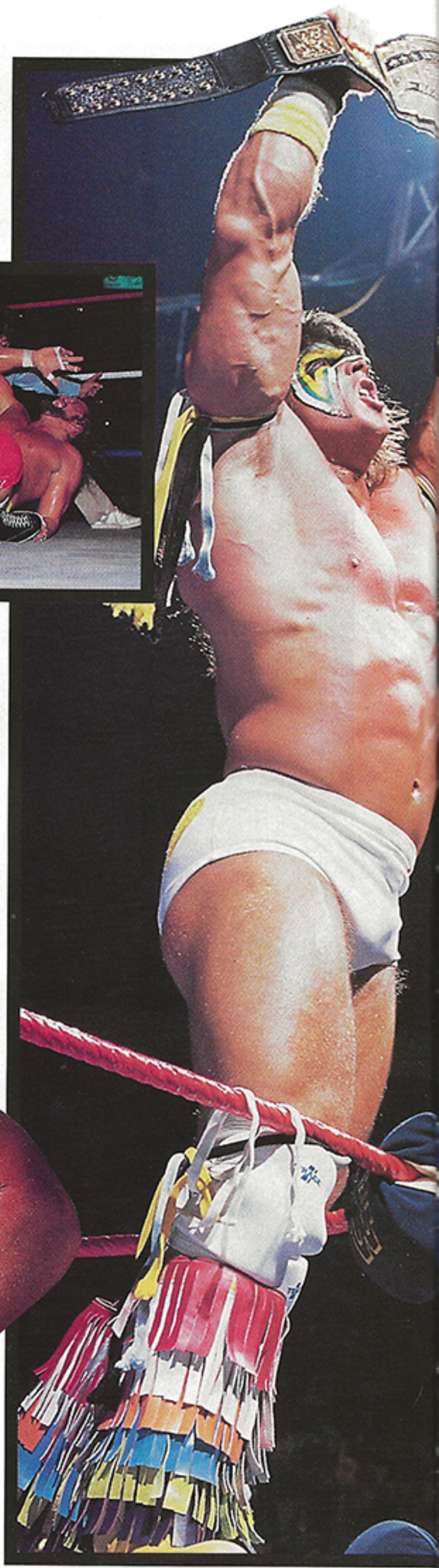
Federation Intercontinental titlist in history. Despite his many other attributes, Ramon defined himself by the belt. Without it, he appeared to be lost. Part of the reason Shawn Michaels often alludes to his SummerSlam '95 ladder match win over Ramon as a special victory is that Razor bested the Heartbreak Kid in a prior ladder match for the Intercontinental Title at WrestleMania X.

#6. MR. PERFECT

Many wrestlers come into the World Wrestling Federation claiming to be the most incredible athlete on the planet. When Curt Hennig re-christened himself "Mr. Perfect," he needed a feat to validate his words. It happened when the Ultimate Warrior vacated the Intercontinental Championship after his WrestleMania VI World Wrestling Federation Title win over Hulk Hogan. A tournament was held to crown a new Intercontinental kingpin, and Mr. Perfect rose above the pack, snaring the prize. Despite his boasts, Hennig wasn't a "perfect" champion—he lost the belt to Texas Tornado" Kerry Von Erich, then won it back a short time later. But he was a great one. Had he not been injured before his match at SummerSlam '91—the night he finally dropped the belt to Bret Hart —some experts contend he could have broken the Honky Tonk Man's record for longest Intercontinental Title.

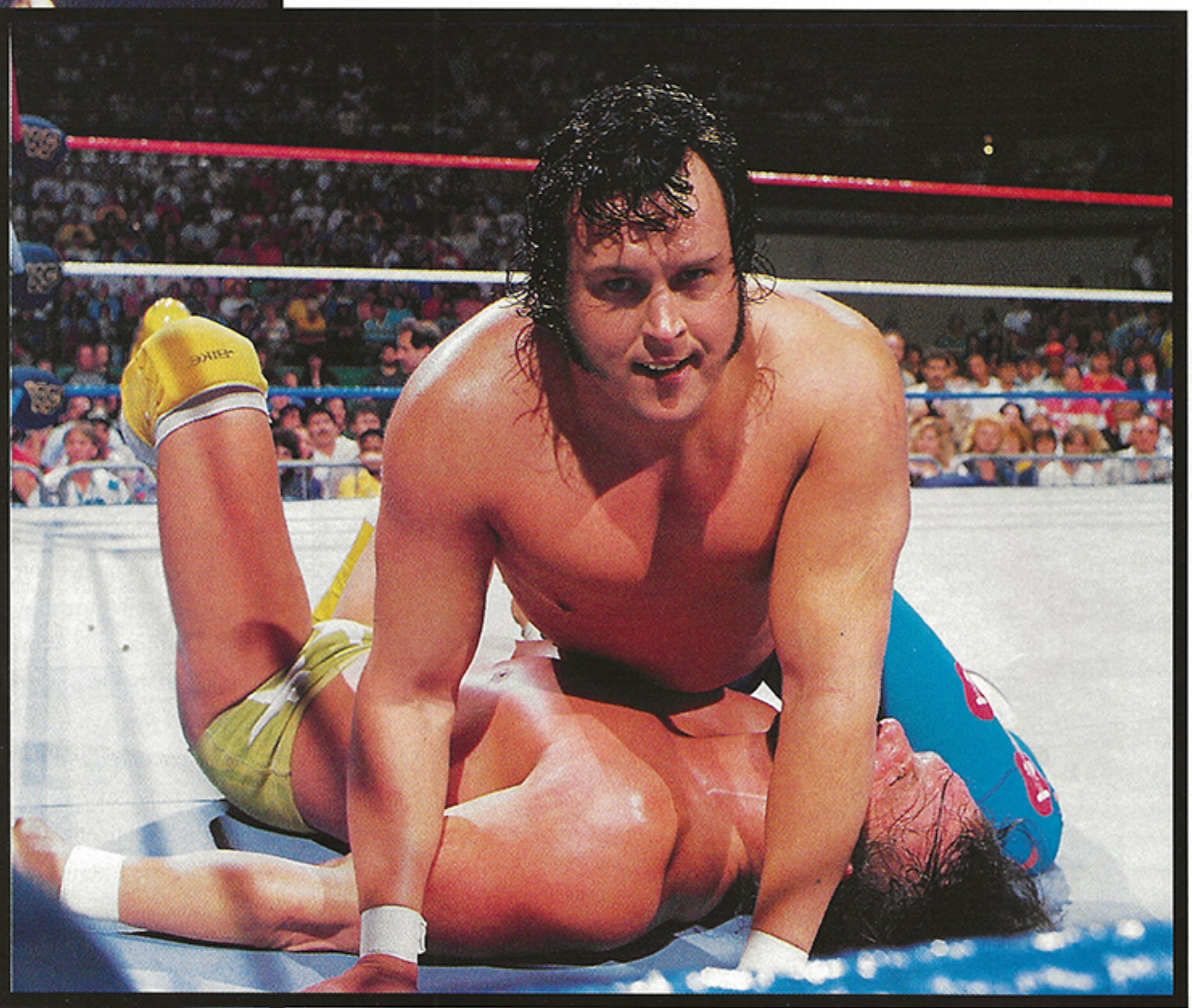
#5. TITO SANTANA

Tito Santana was one individual who centered much of his career around the Intercontinental Championship. While others viewed the belt as a launching point for other things, Tito saw the title for what it was: among the greatest trophies an athlete could acquire. The fiery Mexican prepared for every title defense as if his life depended on the outcome, usually beating his opponents



with the flying elbow or figure four leglock. Santana's attitude about the belt rubbed off on his fellow gladiators. Subsequent champions have expressed the desire to defend the Intercontinental Belt with the same degree of class as Santana. reign.

as more than just the "flavor of the week." Many contend that, during his Intercontinental tenure, the Warrior was more popular than the World Wrestling Federation Champion at the time, Hulk Hogan—the man he'd eventually dethrone for that title at WrestleMania VI.



#4. THE ULTIMATE WARRIOR

The Honky Tonk Man's dominance of the Intercontinental Title picture ended abruptly at SummerSlam '88 when the Ultimate Warrior careened into the ring, overwhelmed his foe within seconds and wrapped the belt around his waist. The Warrior was a new phenomenon in the World Wrestling Federation, and his Intercontinental victory established him

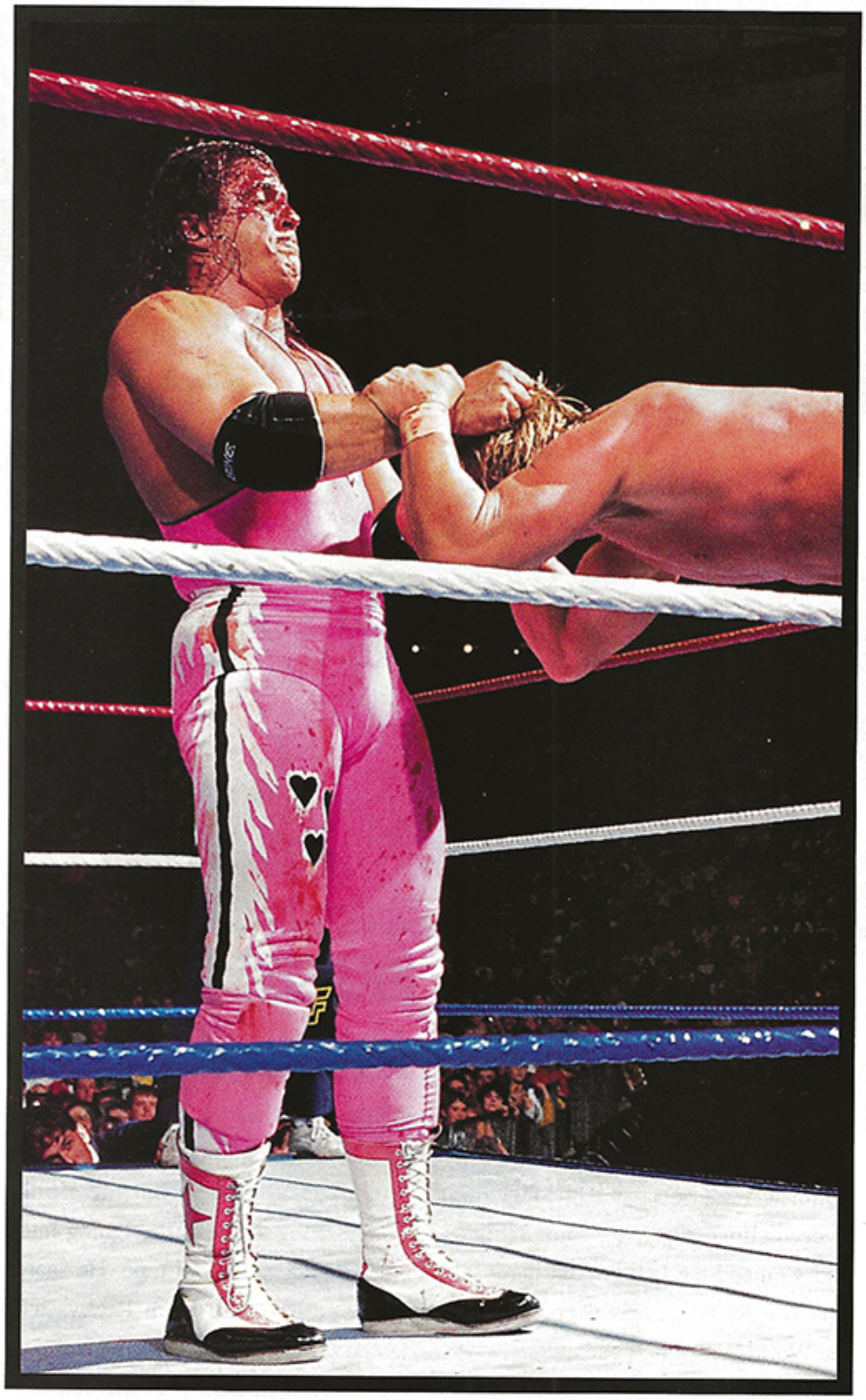
#3. HONKY TONK MAN

While the rest of his stay in the World Wrestling Federation was anything but championship-caliber, many fans have forgotten that the Honky Tonk Man is the longest reigning Intercontinental titlist of all time. He snared the championship from Ricky "The Dragon" Steamboat in 1987 in a shocking upset, then held onto the belt until

SummerSlam '88. In between, Macho Man Randy Savage, Jake "The Snake" Roberts, Hacksaw Jim Duggan and Brutus "The Barber" Beefcake all lined up to topple the Elvis impersonator. But Honky was determined to prove that his win over Steamboat was more than a fluke. And—despite the other obnoxious aspects of his personality—the bad boy from Memphis, Tennessee, showed the wrestling public that he possessed the intestinal fortitude to be a worthy champion.

#2. BRET"HIT MAN" HART

Almost neck and neck with Shawn Michaels in the voting, Hart's Intercontinental reigns jump out from the pages of World Wrestling Federation lore because of the tenacity of the titlist. Bret never backed down from a defense, putting up the Intercontinental belt against friends and foes, wrestling while sick and injured, always refining his style to match that of his competitor. His most spectacular Intercontinental Title victory: stunning buddy Rowdy Roddy Piper after a blood-soaked war at WrestleMania VII. More than any other man, Bret used his Intercontinental tenure to prime himself for the Federation Belt, which he captured in 1992, months after his triumph over Piper.



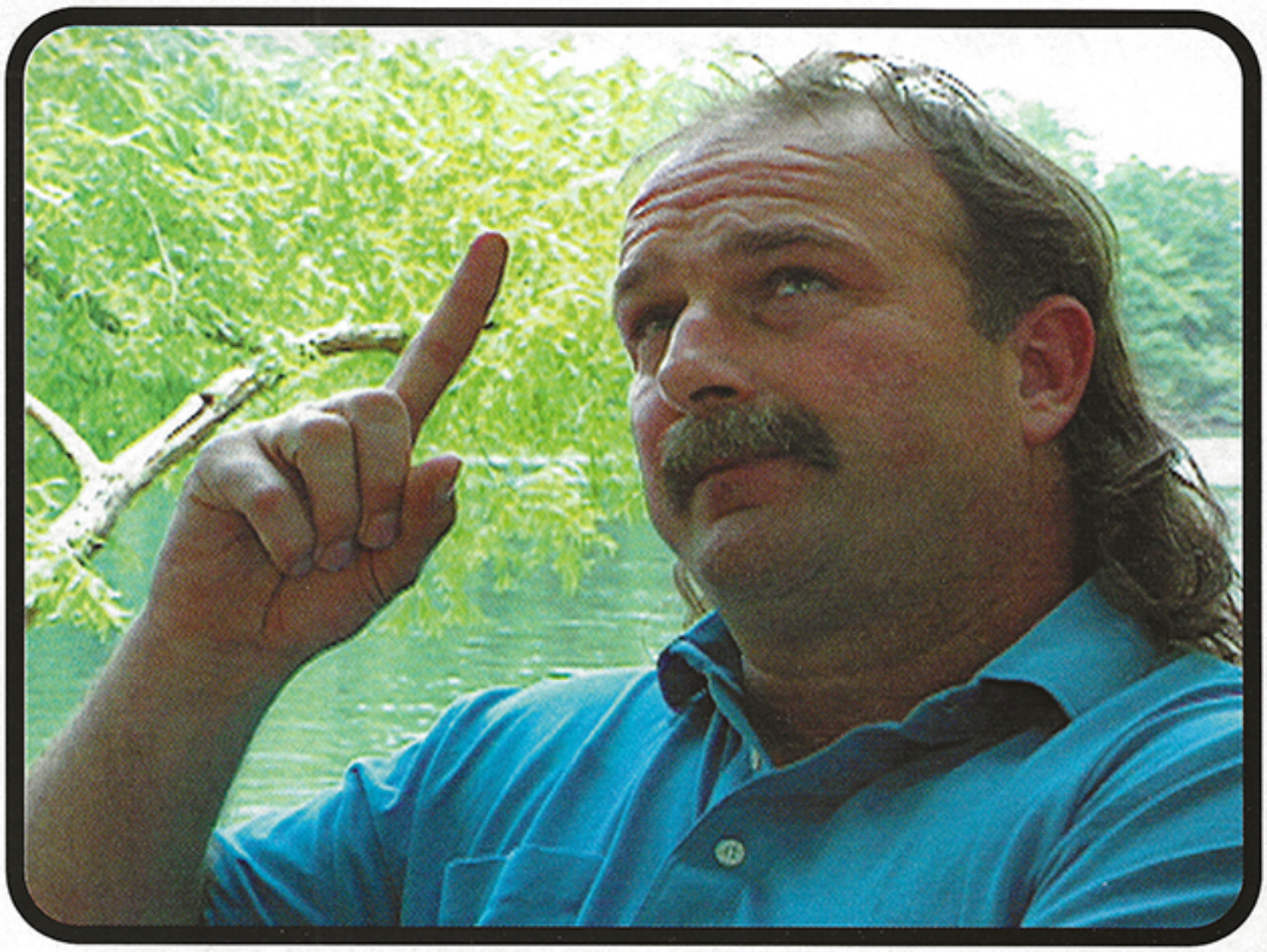
#1. SHAWN MICHAELS

The Heartbreak Kid Shawn Michael's name has all but grown synonymous with the World Wrestling Federation Intercontinental Title. From the moment that he decided to switch from tag team competition and become a singles competitor almost until the day he captured the World Wrestling Federation Championship at WrestleMania XII, Michaels was either wearing the Intercontinental Belt or pursuing it. Trivia fans have noted that he also lost the Intercontinental Belt on two occasions without being defeated in the squared circle: Once, he was stripped of the title in the midst of a sabbatical that he took from the World Wrestling Federation; another time, he forfeited the belt due to injuries that he sustained outside the ring. His greatest Intercontinental Title defense came at SummerSlam '95, when he triumphed over the Bad Guy Razor Ramon in an unforgettable ladder match. If Shawn Michaels brings the same level of pride and tenacity to his current World Wrestling Federation Championship reign, that title will ascend to an even greater level of dignity. ■

"I Didn't Wa

JAKE ROBERTS: A MAN ON THE LONG JOURNEY BACK

At the time of his 1985 debut in the World Wrestling Federation, word slithered out rapidly that Jake "The Snake" Roberts was a man you didn't want to mess with.



With the use of his awesome finishing maneuver, the DDT, Roberts quickly became known as an icon of destruction within the ranks of the Federation. His casualties along the way consisted of superstars such as Rick Rude, Randy Savage and Bad News Brown, with perhaps his greatest conquest of all being the late, legendary Andre the Giant, a man whom Jake miraculously defeated at WrestleMania V.

Over the years, much like a poisonous snake bite, Jake was sucking the life out of opponent after opponent. However, behind the scenes, little did anyone realize that he was involved in a personal battle that was much more dangerous than any war the squared circle had to offer. A battle, which in the end... almost cost him his life.

For over 10 years, drugs and alcohol dominated the life of Jake Roberts. After losing his family and dignity to addic-

ant To Live Anymore."

Interview By Jim Ross

tion, Jake had to find a way to get clean and sober before he lost all hope of getting his life back together. According to Jake, he was able to turn his life around by finding the hope through his personal savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, after a four-year absence from the Federation, Jake has triumphantly returned, setting his sights on spreading the word of the man who gave him the power to pull his life and family back together.

Recently, Jim Ross took the time to interview Jake at his home in Georgia. With Stone Mountain as his backdrop, Jake discussed in-depth the details of his life as an addict of cocaine, alcohol, crack and many other drugs, and the suicidal effect it had on his life and his family. The interview that you are about to read was not printed to shock you but perhaps to show a ray of hope to drug and alcohol abusers around the world.

The World Wrestling Federation Raw Magazine is the ONLY vehicle in which this interview can be seen. The excerpts seen on World Wrestling Federation programs were only the beginning—we now present you with what the censors refused to release.

ROSS: The first question, Jake, and to me the obvious one: Did your family have an effect on you early on in your life that may have consequently led you to your adult battle with drugs and alcohol?

JAKE: Jim, first of all, you don't know the real Jake Roberts. You don't know what made Jake "The Snake." I didn't have any trip through the tulips when I was a kid. My mother was very young when I was born. She was only 13. There were three kids, including me, with each one of us was being passed out to a different place. As a child, I became ashamed. I became ashamed for many reasons. I was ashamed because my mother was so young. I was ashamed because I didn't have real "parents." And I was even ashamed for my brother and sister. I knew I had a brother and sister, but I didn't know where they were. I couldn't even talk about it because I was embarrassed. Kids in school can be so tough on other kids once they realize that they have something inside that bothers them. At a very young age, I started to push away from everyone. I became a loner and a very angry young man. As I got older, the anger grew inside me like a cancer. I never was around my father while I was growing up. Being that he too was a wrestler, he was on the road a lot. The only reason I got into pro wrestling was to try to gain my father's love. I wanted to be an architect, not a wrestler. It was all to prove I was worthy of his love. I was so wrapped up in anger that you couldn't stop me. My mind would work 24 hours a day trying to figure out how to perform some act in such a way that it would shock you so much that you would either be scared of me... or love me for it. Jake Roberts was a freak of nature. Jake Roberts was a man who you didn't know what he was going to

do next. When I got back on track three years ago, my father came to me and said, "Son, I'm proud of you for changing." He saw the monster I was. I love my father now.

ROSS: OK, Jake. Looking back, at what point in your life did the drug and alcohol abuse begin?

JAKE: I guess for me the first time I had a drink was when I was 10 years old. I did it out of "fun." My grandfather was an alcoholic. I should have caught on right there. He would get drunk and hide his liquor because my grandmother would throw it away if she found it. My friends and I found some of it in the chicken house, and we had a few drinks. But the real abuse started in high school, when I would drink some beers after the football games. I was out running the streets and having fun. That's where it started to escalate. To me, there are three stages of addiction. The first stage starts out as I "WANT to" to try this. It may seem harmless at first, but it's not. You then go from "WANT to" to "NEED to." That is when you need a drink to loosen up after you've had a bad day. And then you go onto the third stage, the one I lived in for so many years—the "HAVE to" stage. I had to have a drink or take some cocaine just for my day to get going.

ROSS: At what point did alcohol cross over into your professional life, Jake?

JAKE: When you are in that spotlight, you get caught up in this false world that everyone likes you... loves you. The next thing you hear when you go into a club or bar is, "Hey, let me buy you a drink." Or maybe a pretty young woman would come up to me and say, "You've always been my favorite. Let me buy you a drink." You want to make yourself accessible to the fans, and you also want to forget what you may have left at home. I used alcohol to celebrate, but I could also find any reason to drink.

ROSS: Besides alcohol, Jake, what other drugs were you addicted to?

JAKE: Everything but heroin. I did it all—from steroids to pharmaceuticals to crack cocaine. I got into everything... but the heroin. People don't understand. They say to me, "How did you get into that stuff?" Once the hook of addiction is in you, it just digs deeper. I didn't know how to take that hook out of me. I was real big on crack cocaine and pain pills. After numerous surgeries and broken bones, the drugs are accessible. Once you have them in your system, your mind starts to cry out for them 24 hours a day. My abuse was pretty much based on anything that would make Jake Roberts feel different from what he felt.

ROSS: A question that is on everyone's mind, Jake... did you ever wrestle while on drugs?

JAKE: Sure, mostly while I was injured. I would take a few pain pills and go out there. Very few times did I wrestle while I drank because I didn't feel that was right. If I was down or tired or hadn't slept for a long period of time, I would just take some morphine, coke or pain pills to get back up. I said to myself, "My boss will realize I'm doing a good job. I'm going out to perform for these people." I could justify anything. Any addict can come up for a reason to justify anything—whether it meant robbing you or stealing your car.

ROSS: Aside from your wrestling career, Jake, how did the addiction to drugs and alcohol affect your family life?

JAKE: It was hard to let myself down, but it was also tough to let my wife down. Scare her... disappoint her. It got to the point where she would have to stay awake at night just so I wouldn't die. I would quit breathing sometimes after doing too many pills or cocaine, and she would shake me. Sometimes she would have to dig vomit out of my mouth because I would be choking on it in my sleep. But when your children are afraid of Daddy... when your children are afraid to go to sleep at night because Daddy might leave to get high... when that little child doesn't run to you first... that makes you want to die.

ROSS: What did your fellow workers think of you at that time—the wrestlers? Did they offer to help you?

JAKE: Offer to help? I was the leader of the pack. If someone found a pill, he would bring it to Jake and ask him what it was and what it could do for him. Jake Roberts knew where every club in the country was. I could find drugs in countries that didn't have drugs! It was strange how guys used to look up to me because I was a heavy partier. Now those same guys look at me and say, "That's not real; that's just some mind game he's playing." That's all right, it doesn't bother me. They made fun of Jesus too. If that's what they want to think, that's fine. Hide and watch where I end up going.

ROSS: Jake, at what point during the addiction did you hit rock bottom with your family?

JAKE: That was probably the hardest thing for me to deal with after I became an addict. There was so much shame involved. You see what you're doing to your family, but you don't want to acknowledge it, or take responsibility, because it's so painful. The bottom line for me was that I didn't want to live anymore... I just wanted to kill myself. I had nothing left to lose. I had already lost my family. They didn't leave me... I ran them off. To say that they were the reason I got cleaned up, that's not true. I just got to the point that I knew I was going to die, and I didn't care that I was going to die. That's when I reached out.

ROSS: Today, how does Jake "The Snake" Roberts focus on staying off drugs?

JAKE: First things first: Pray. I realize that prayer first thing in the morning is going to help me a lot and get me focused on where I need to go. Read the Bible. Some people say, "Well, I have a higher power than that." Yeah, well so do I! I stand on a rock. For me to stay focused, all I have to remember is that God loves me. God never intended for Jake Roberts to die or become a failure. God's plans for me are grand. I used to think Jake Roberts was the biggest, baddest dude walking this planet until I found out that there was a dude who made this planet and the whole universe. God loves me enough that he gave up his only son so I wouldn't have to die. I am comfortable in following him. As long as I am spreading his word, he's going to take care of me.

ROSS: Jake, after turning your life around, how long have you been clean and sober?

JAKE: Never long enough. It's something you fight with daily. It's been a long time since I smoked anything or popped any pills. In the last couple years, there have been some times when I have slipped. I don't feel good about those times. You know, coming from where I came from and where I'm at now is a true blessing. I'm not going to come on camera and say, "I haven't had a drink in three years," because that's

not true. They are few and far between, and they're getting farther between. I'm feeling good about myself. I enjoy the sober and clean days. And as far as the other stuff—the pills, the pot and the cocaine—that's all gone.

ROSS: How does your family feel about Jake "The Snake" Roberts competing in the World Wrestling Federation again?

JAKE: The children are excited because Daddy is back on TV. The children don't like seeing Daddy go to work and getting hurt though. My wife still has a lot of fear, a lot of bad memories. You have to understand that not only was I out there drinking and doing drugs, but I was with many other women, being unfaithful to her. She's forgiven me. For those fears to never bother her again, I have to pray. There is a fear in her that if I get back out there, I'm

going to fall back into it. It's a real fear, and I understand that. She has every right in the world to be afraid. I would have two or three days off, and I would show up home on the third day. Where was I for the first two days? I would be in a hotel room doing drugs with other people. My wife and I have been blessed with two more children since we got back together. She doesn't want to lose that.

ROSS: As your children get older, Jake, will it be hard to tell them about what you were like?

JAKE: Not at all. I will be excited to tell them. It was a victory not for me, but for God. God is who brought me through this. I did a lot of things in my life, and now I can use those things for God's glory. I can go out and share it with other addicts, high school kids and church groups. I didn't live through the addiction because Jake Roberts was some big, tough guy. That's not it at all. It's because a hand kept reaching down and picking me up. I'll be happy to tell my children about it.

ROSS: Jake, now that you are back in the Federation competing, how do the wrestlers of the New Generation perceive you?

JAKE: I've had the opportunity to be in the locker rooms, and a lot of the new guys are watching me. A lot of them heard about how I used to be. They heard I used to be a loner. But now they see how open I am about the addiction. Sometimes I stir up a little in the locker rooms because I see a guy that is starting to go the wrong way, and I'll ask him "By the way, how's your family?" That hits home. And when I do that, they are offended... and they should be. All I'm trying to do is let them know what they are about to lose. I was fortunate to get my family back. Someone else might not be so fortunate.

ROSS: Does the World Wrestling Federation require you to take drug tests?

JAKE: Me and everybody else! I thank them for that. The Federation has taken a stand, and it's time for them to take a stand. Years ago there were no drug tests. It was basically "You do what you want to, and I'll do what I want to." That's the bad thing about addiction—you get into something bad and don't realize how much of a monster it is until it's got hold of you.

ROSS: Unfortunately, drugs have become a part of big-time sports today. What advice would you give to other athletes in other sports who may be heading down the same path that you rode for so long?

JAKE: They say we are all grown men. Some of us aren't. Some athletes grew up in pain or in shame. Maybe they grew up with luggage from the past. You have kids going right out of high school and going straight to the NBA. We have football players who went to the Super Bowl that are getting busted for cocaine. Then you have Jake Roberts and what he did. In wrestling, we've had several wrestlers die or commit suicide. It's just not the football, baseball or wrestling. What's this world coming to? Then again, you have players like Cal Ripken Jr. who play for the love of the game. That's why Jake Roberts is here. The New Generation—these young kids—they get the money thrown at them. They have to make so many different choices. If you make the wrong choice, then you have to pay the price. These young athletes need to look to people that have "been there, done that." They may have the quickness and the youth, but they don't have the wisdom. My hope is that I can help these young athletes so they don't make the same mistakes that Jake Roberts did. I don't want you to look at Jake Roberts as a role model. The greatest role model in the world is in the Bible. That's something we need to focus more on.

ROSS: Jake, when all is said and done, how do you want people to remember you?

JAKE: I don't want people to remember me as a great wrestler. I want people to remember that I was a man who was so lost—and so blind—but who came back to find everything in God. I want people to remember that Jake Roberts was a Christian who wanted to help other people who were suffering the same pain and problems he was. A man who loved other men and children. I want to be remembered as a man who wanted to let everyone know there is hope... and there is. ■

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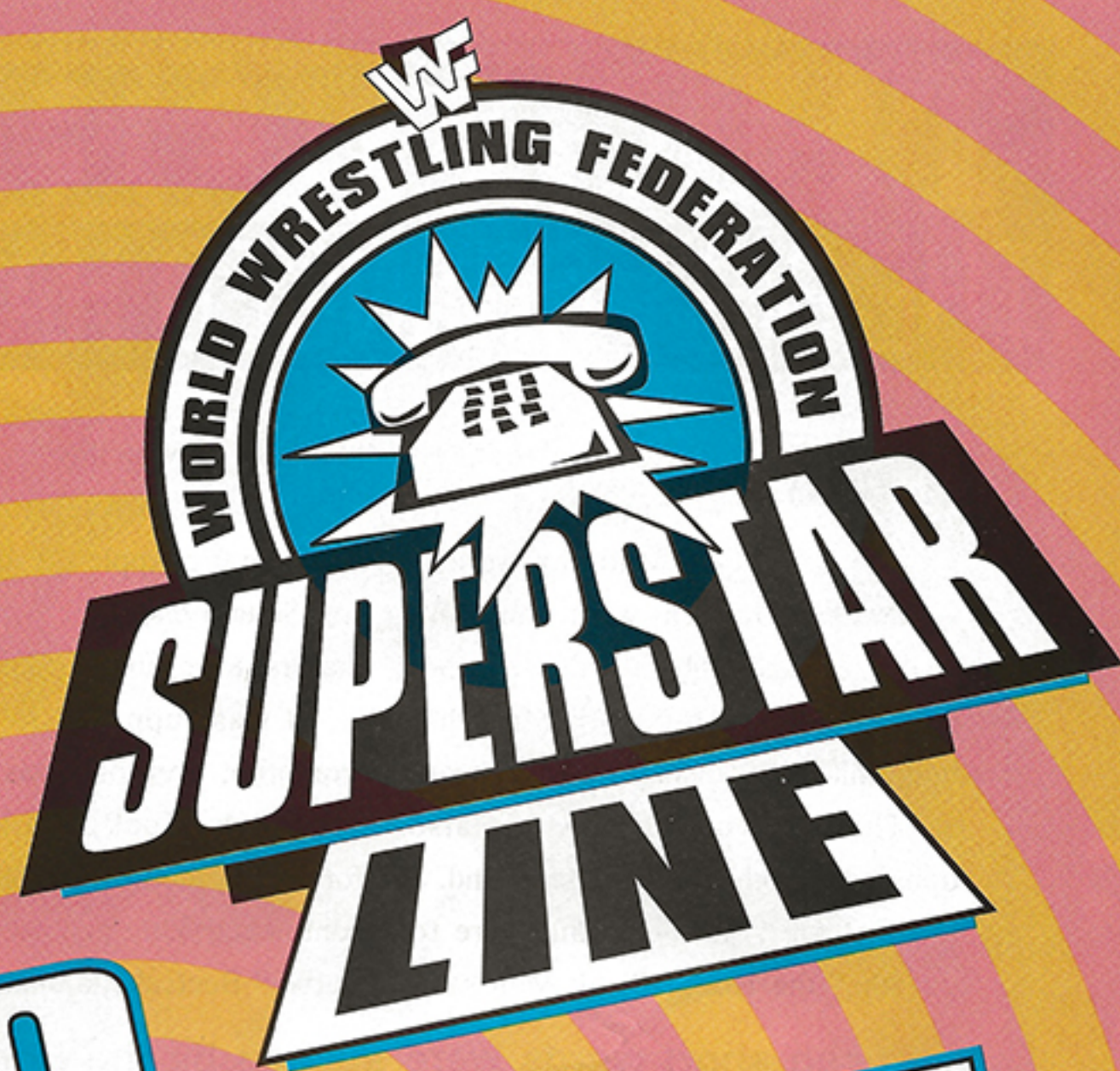

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THE NIGHT THE BELT CHANGED HANDS

By Bill Banks

The statement echoed throughout New York City's Madison Square Garden with amazing clarity. Thirteen short words were spoken by the Honky Tonk Man that night that would change his life forever. Thirteen words that would also transform another man into a legend.

"Get me somebody out here to wrestle," the Honky Tonk Man said. "I don't care who it is!"

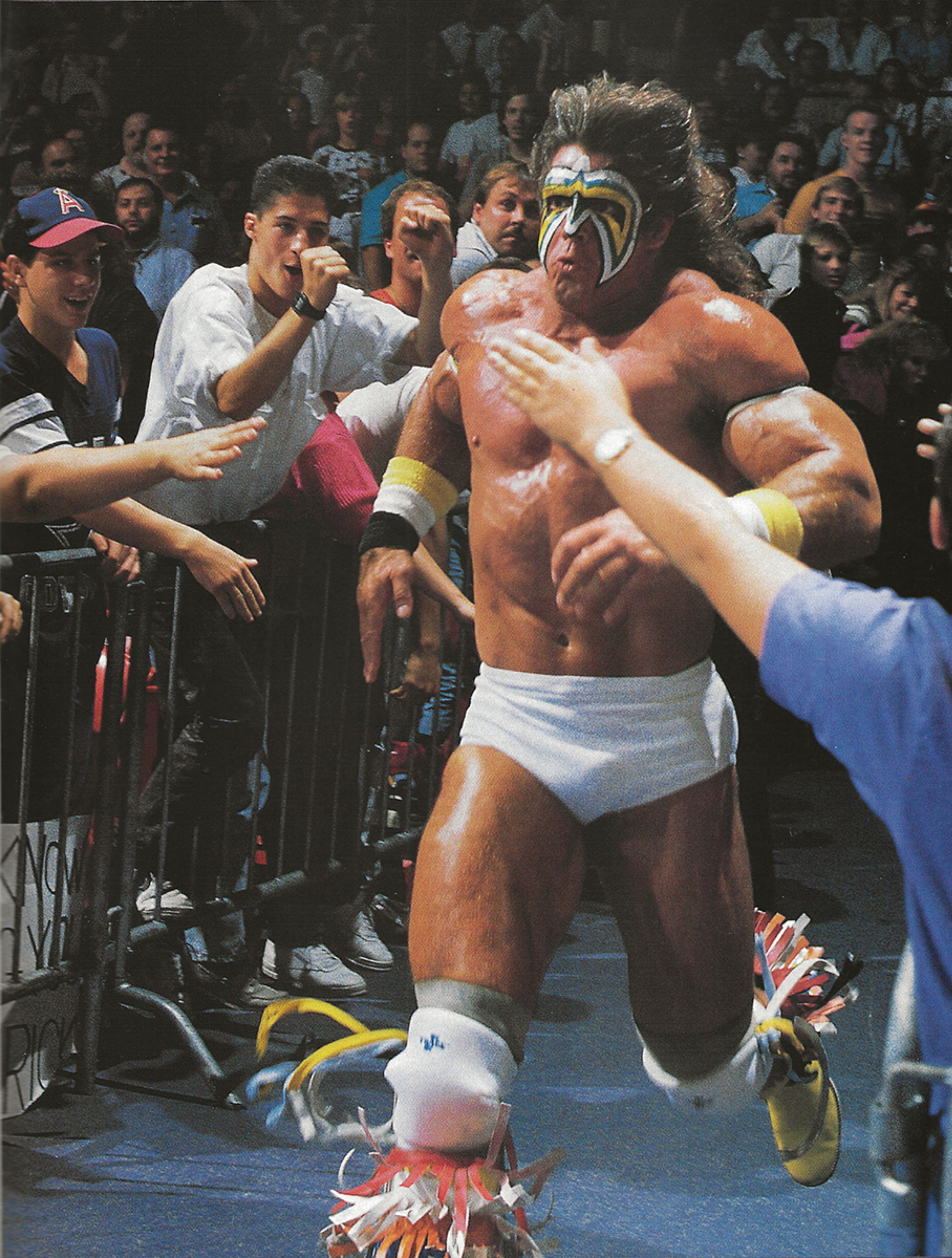
The date was August 29, 1988. The site: The Big Apple—a sold-out Madison Square Garden crowd witnessing the first-ever SummerSlam.

It was supposed to be the confrontation everyone was waiting for. The Honky Tonk Man had prepared for over a month to defend the Intercontinental Title against Brutus "The Barber" Beefcake, a match that would hopefully settle the ongoing feud between the two. However, what the promoters didn't know that night was that Brutus Beefcake would be involved in a freak accident and would not be able to compete—leaving the door wide open for a new No.1 contender.

Thirteen short words were spoken by the Honky Tonk Man that night that would change his life forever. "Get me somebody out here to wrestle," the Honky Tonk Man said. "I don't care who it is!"

The Honky Tonk Man was cool and confident as he entered the ring that night. The news about Beefcake let him grow even more cocky in the squared circle. This is when Honky said those words while pointing to the locker room.The broadcasters for the event, Gorilla Monsoon and Superstar Billy Graham, let their feelings be known about the challenge that Honky had just made.

Graham knew that Honky was about to bite off more than



he could possibly chew!

"Don't say that, man!" the Superstar said. "There're some people back in the locker room that would take Honky apart!"

"Who is the No. 1 challenger?" Monsoon said.

This is when all hell broke loose.

What a pity that the Honky Tonk Man never even had a chance to take his ring attire off. As a matter of fact, he never even knew what hit him.

Standing in the ring along with Honky and his manager, Jimmy Hart, Howard Finkel soon realized that something unexpected was about to happen when the entrance music blared.

Ring announcer Howard Finkel remembers the night all too well. Standing in the ring along with Honky and his manager, Jimmy Hart, Finkel soon realized that something unexpected was about to happen when the entrance music blared.

"It shocked everyone how lightning-quick it happened," Finkel said. "It was all a blur. Fate was definitely on the side of the Warrior that night."

The music roared to life on the loudspeakers. It was a sound familiar to all the fans of the World Wrestling Federation, but a sound greatly unexpected at that moment in time. Running from the back came the new No.1 challenger, the Ultimate Warrior!

The look on the Honky Tonk Man's face that night was something that the fans would never forget. It was easy to see his reaction—you can even read his lips if you watch the match again. Honky turned to everyone and anyone he could with a look of disbelief as the word "What?!" poured out his mouth.

As soon as the UltimateWarrior reached the squared circle, that mouth was quickly closed.

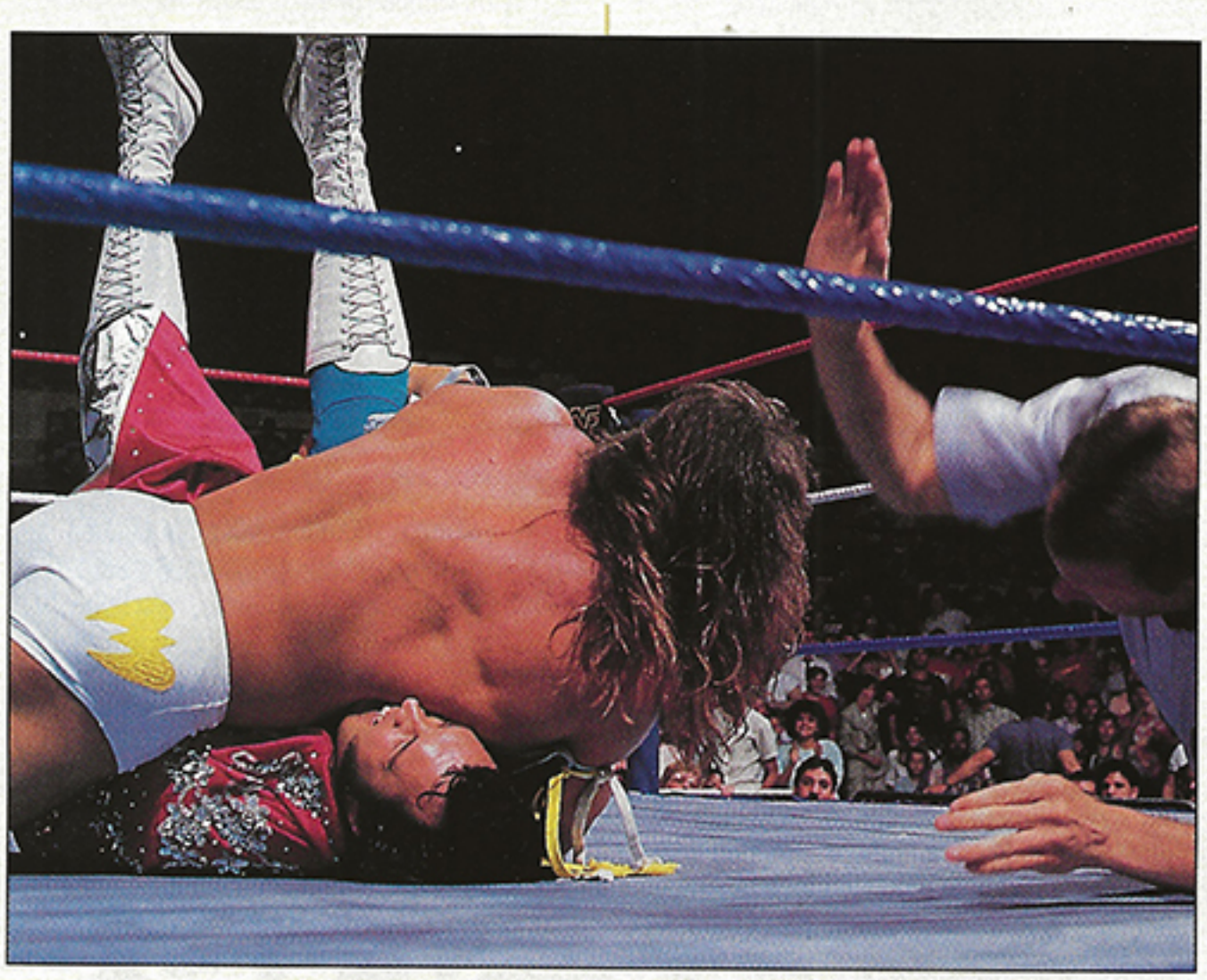
With the impact of the first punch by the Warrior, the fans erupted. For months they had been waiting for someone to destroy the Honky Tonk Man, and the moment was finally before them. Then, after two punches, a flying tackle and one clothesline, they had their wish. The match lasted barely 30 seconds, but the impact it would have on the World Wrestling Federation would last forever.

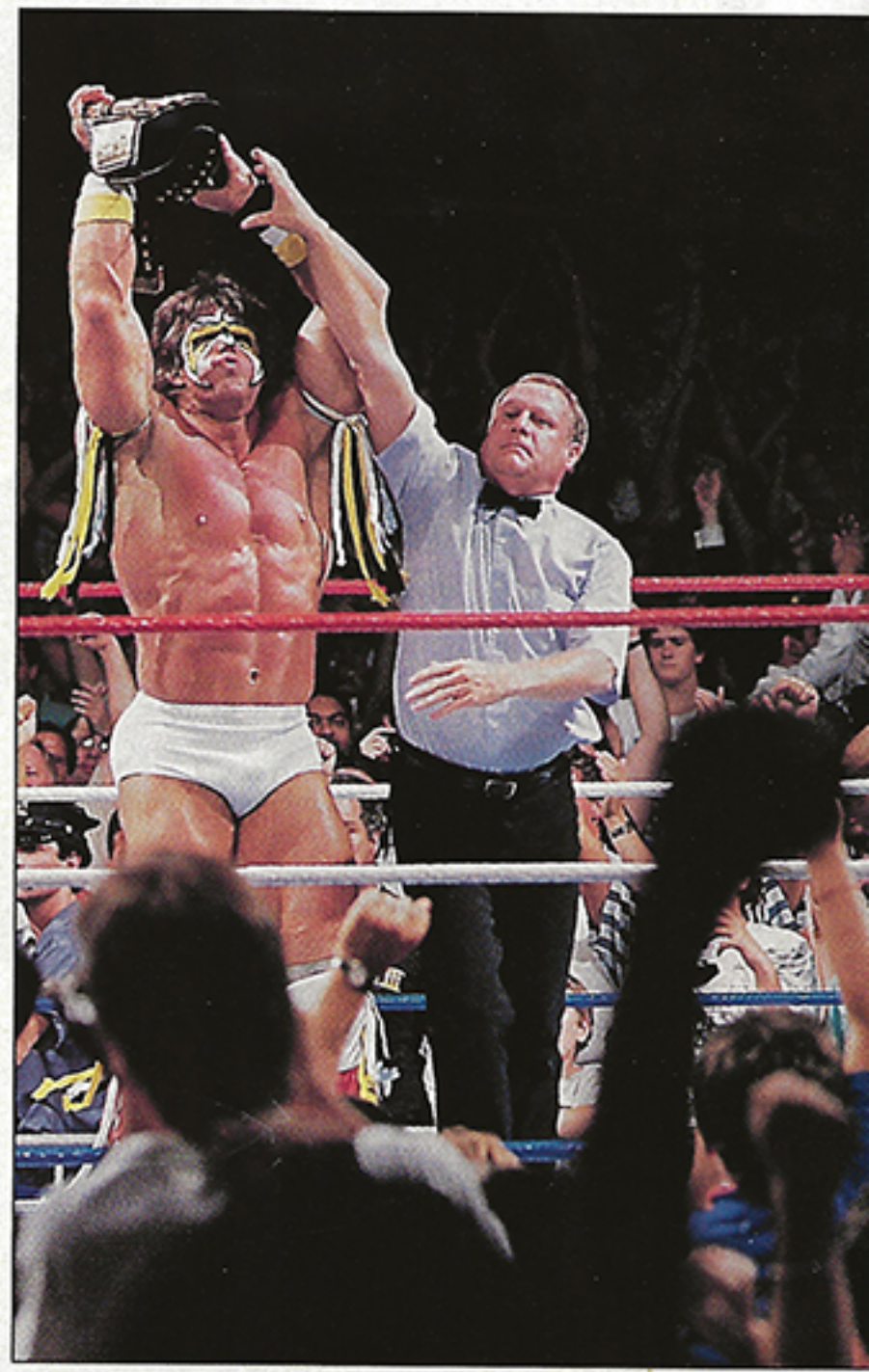
When the referee's hand slapped down on the mat for the third time, Honky rolled out of the ring with the look of amazement still fresh on his face. It was like a bad dream for Honky, something out of a "Nightmare on Elm Street" movie. But this time, Freddy was the Ultimate Warrior, and it would take a lot more than a pinch to end his nightmare.

The World Wrestling Federation's Intercontinental Title was now in the hands of the Ultimate Warrior. Walking from ring post to ring post, the Warrior lifted his title belt in the air and displayed it for all the fans. The outcome of this match truly changed the excitement level that night—it was something you couldn't measure with any instrument on Earth.

In a few short minutes, the Warrior had gone from the No. 2 contender to the new Intercontinental Champion. Catapulted into superstardom, the Warrior defended the title against all challengers.

The match lasted barely three minutes, but the impact it would have on the Federation would last forever.





If it weren't for Beefcake being unable to show up, what would have happened to the Warrior? Would he have ever gotten the chance to beat Hulk Hogan for the World Wrestling Federation Title at WrestleMania VI? Would he have grown to become the most recognized icon in the World Wrestling Federation today?

The final words spoken by Gorilla Monsoon after that match with the Honky Tonk Man cast a bright light on the awesome future impending for the Warrior.

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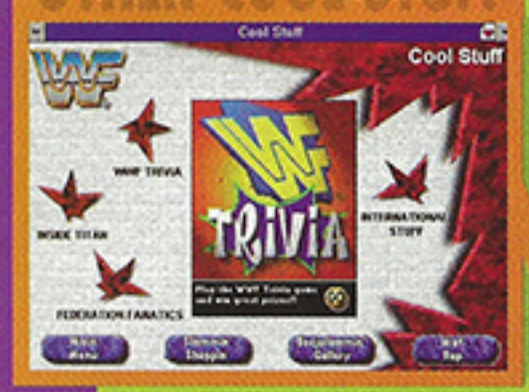

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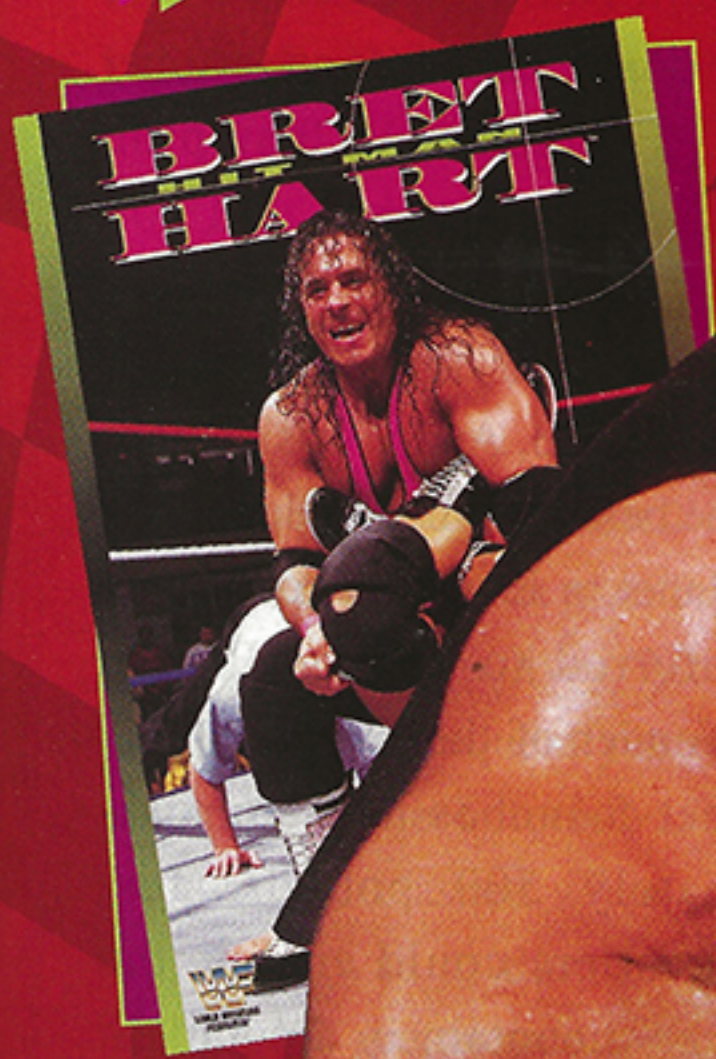

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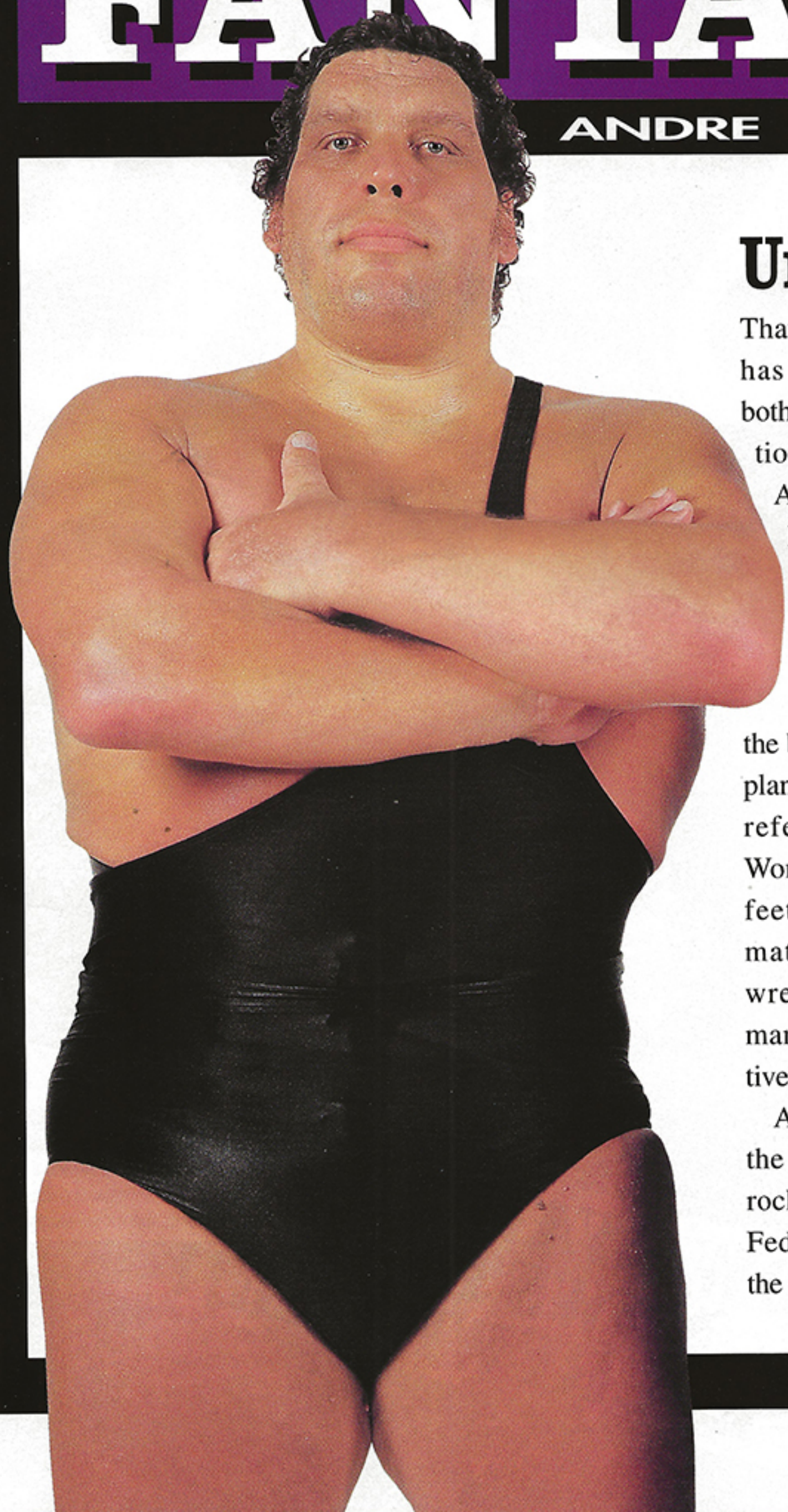
ANDRE THE GIANT



Unbeatable.

That one concise expression has been used to describe both World Wrestling Federation Hall of Famer the late Andre the Giant and former Federation Champion the Undertaker.

Before his untimely death on January 27, 1993, Andre was perhaps the best-known wrestler on the planet, a leviathan commonly referred to as "the Eighth Wonder of the World." At 7-feet-5-inches and approximately 500 pounds, few wrestlers could engage the man-mountain in a competitive match.

As Andre's career was on the wane, another force was rocking the World Wrestling Federation. "The Man from the Dark Side," the Undertaker,

WARFARE

VS. THE UNDERTAKER

By Keith Elliot Greenberg

was bestowed with powers that appeared to originate in another dimension. By the time Andre passed away, the Undertaker had already held the World Wrestling Federation Belt and was building a legacy that persists to this day.

Andre and the Undertaker may have shared the same dressing rooms and battled in the same arenas—but at different stages of their lives. Matwatchers have frequently speculated over the outcome if the two had clashed when the Giant was at the peak of his greatness. The match probably would have headlined WrestleMania—and lived in the memories of fans for decades.

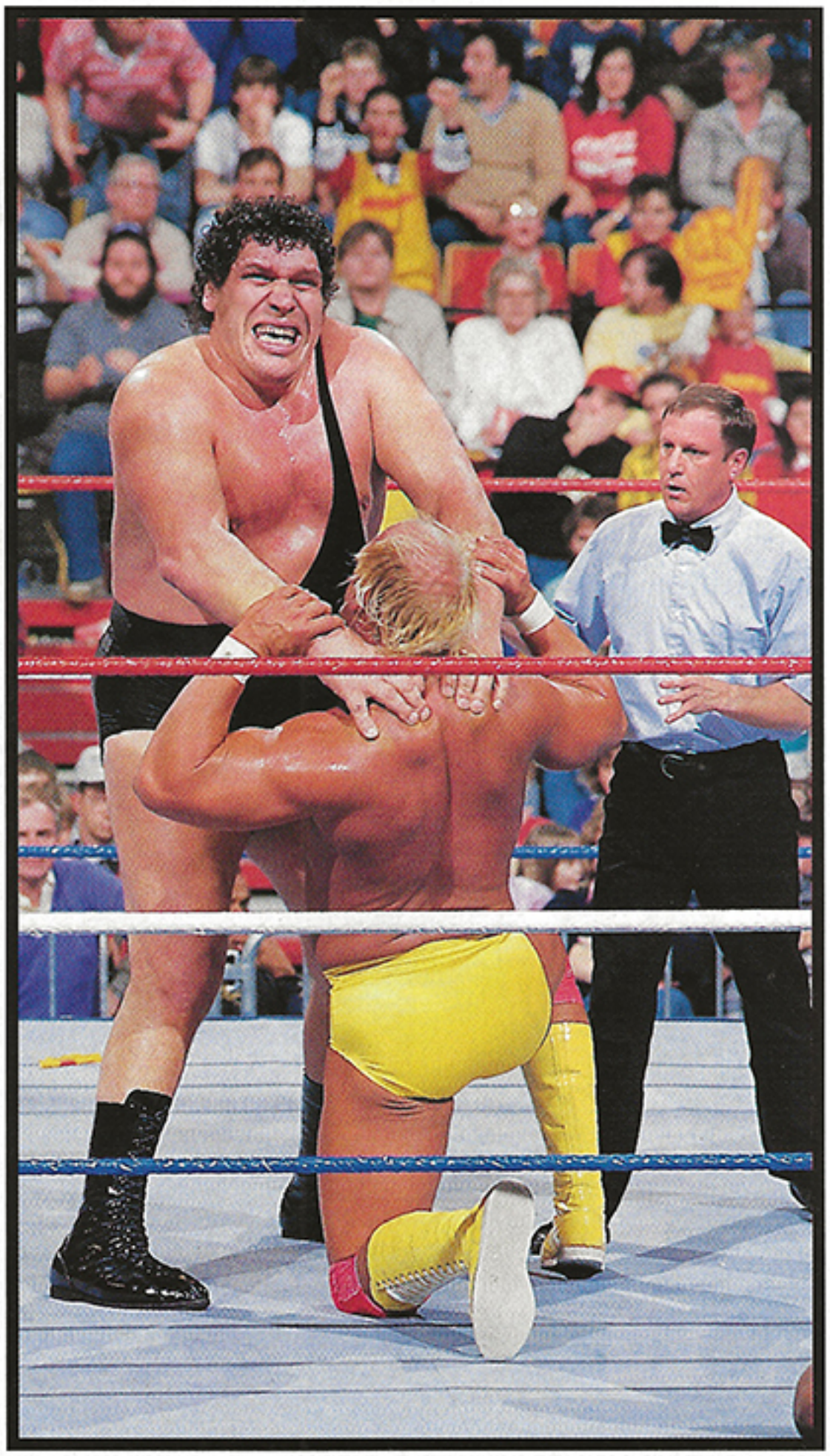
ANDRE THE GIANT
HEIGHT: 7'5"
WEIGHT: 500 pounds

STRENGTHS: Although Andre was a gifted athlete—as a young man, he competed at both soccer and boxing, and once had a tryout with the National Football League's Detroit Lions—what made the Giant unique was his size. Andre was so big that some wrestlers couldn't fit their arms around his waist to execute a simple bearhug. And his enormous proportions were complemented by extraordinary strength.

WEAKNESSES: If the Giant had one flaw, it was in the speed department. He was just too big to move across the ring with exceptional grace. Because of his other talents, this rarely served as a handicap.

KEY WINS: Two of Andre's most illustrious wins came before the WrestleMania era in front of raucous, outdoor crowds at New York's Shea Stadium. In 1976, he embarrassed pugilist Chuck Wepner in a rare boxer versus wrestler battle. Then, four years later, he pinned future Federation kingpin Hulk Hogan cleanly in the middle of the Shea Stadium ring. In 1988, Andre captured Hogan's belt, with the help of a corrupt referee, but was swiftly stripped of the title. On December 13, 1989, Andre and partner Haku— aka the Colossal Connection—snared the Tag Team Belts with a triumph over Demolition in Huntsville, Alabama.

KEY LOSSES: At WrestleMania VI, Andre and Haku lost the belts to Ax and Smash of Demolition. The Giant was so angry that he attacked Haku and manager Bobby Heenan immediately after the contest. Heenan was also in the Giant's corner when Hulk Hogan defeated him at WrestleMania III. A videotape of the match showed referee Joey Marella striking the mat three times earlier in the contest when Andre had Hogan down for a near-fall. But Marella allowed the match to continue, and Andre suffered his first pinfall loss.



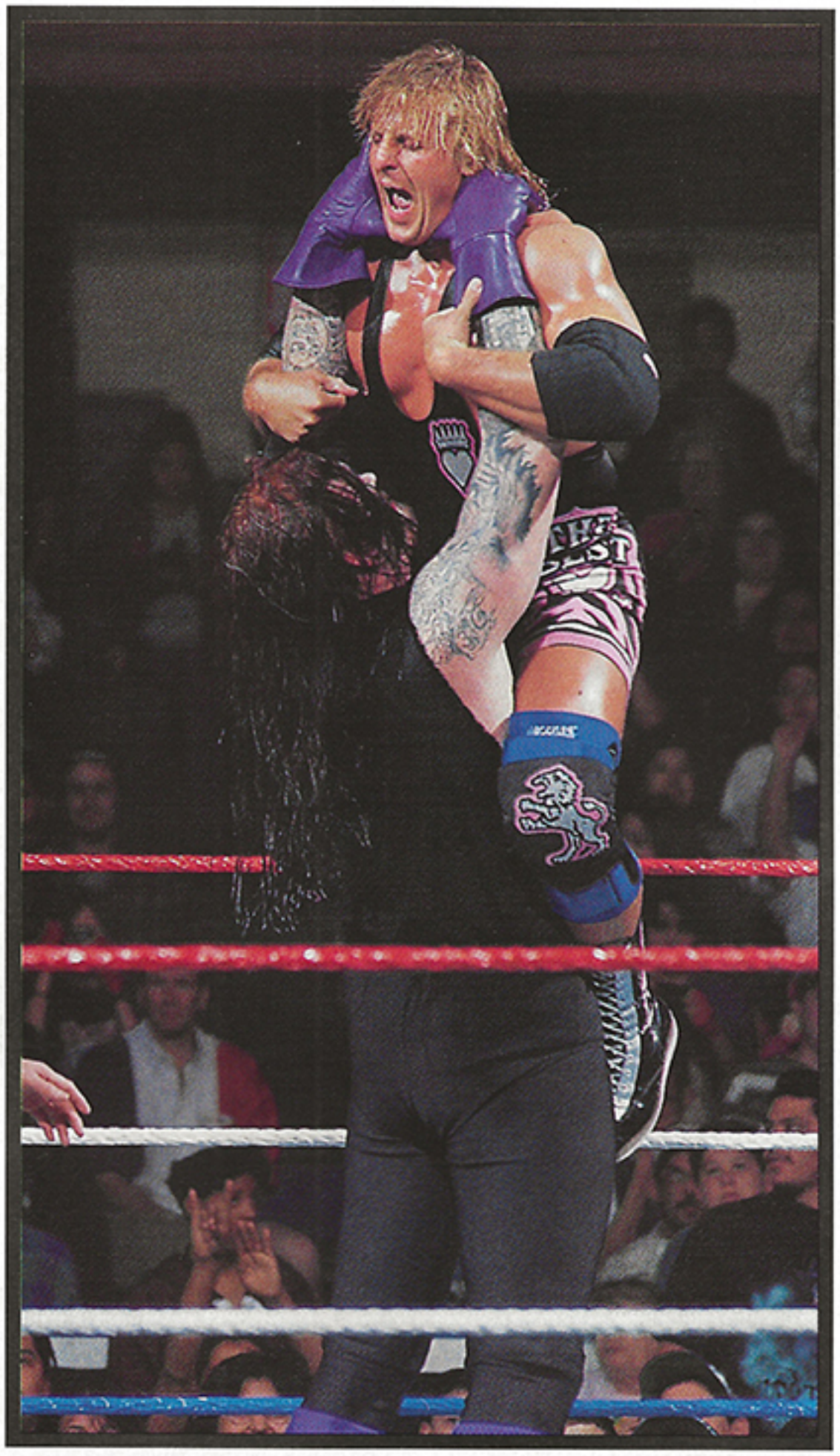
FINISHING MOVE: Andre could pretty much take his pick at how to vanquish an opponent, since elementary wrestling maneuvers executed by the Giant had so many of his rivals crying for the bell. But often Andre put a man out of his misery by slinging him into the ropes, delivering a big foot to the face and dropping on top of the victim as the referee counted to three.

STRATEGY: Against a man as dangerous as the Undertaker, Andre would probably take an aggressive stance. There would be few wristlocks, armbars and fireman's carries, as the Giant delivered a flurry of chops, fists and kicks to the Man from the Dark Side. And Andre would have to constantly hover over his foe. Once the Undertaker showed any signs of recovery, the Giant would be required to pounce once again.

THE UNDERTAKER
HEIGHT: 6'10"
WEIGHT: 328 pounds

STRENGTHS: Aside from his athletic skill, dimensions and ring experience, the Undertaker is renowned for his recuperative skills. The Federation's Grim Reaper is largely described as an "immortal," based on his ability to endure excessive amounts of punishment. Frequently, an adversary will seem to have finished him off. Then, as the opponent looks on in disbelief, the Undertaker slowly rises off the mat.

WEAKNESSES: The Undertaker may be too dependent on the funeral urn his manager, Paul Bearer, carries to the ring. The urn is said to be the source of the Undertaker's strength, and during those rare occasions when it was out of the Pale Reaper's possession, he clearly was off his game. Also, Bearer can distract the Undertaker.Occasionally, he has been attacked from the rear while coming to Bearer's assistance at ringside.



KEY WIN: The Undertaker's most notorious victory occurred at the 1991 Survivor Series when he won the Federation Championship from Hulk Hogan—with Ric Flair's help. Due to the controversial nature of the contest, a rematch was ordered. When that bout failed to end decisively, the Federation Championship was voided until a winner could be determined at the next Royal Rumble (Flair emerged victorious). In essence, the Undertaker shook the Federation to its core, placing the integrity of the title in jeopardy and—arguably—diminishing the credibility of the movement called "Hulkamania."

KEY LOSSES: This past May, Undertaker experienced one of his most embarrassing setbacks during a special "casket match" against Goldust, He was about to place his foe in the coffin when Mankind sprang from the box and pulled in the Undertaker. In 1994, at the Royal Rumble, the Undertaker lost another casket match—this time to Yokozuna—who enclosed his opponent in the crate with the assistance of over a dozen allies. When the match ended, fans were stunned as the Undertaker appeared to resurrect himself and float out of the arena.

FINISHING MOVE: Like Andre, the Undertaker has always battered foes with an eclectic, power-driven arsenal. But his favorite finisher is the Tombstone. A man is first pummeled into near-unconsciousness, then turned upside-down and driven headfirst into the mat, where the Undertaker folds the wrestler's hands across his chest and listens to the three-count.

STRATEGY: Against Andre, the Undertaker would be facing one of the few who truly dwarfed him. His strategy would therefore be to cut Andre down with thrusts to the throat, then lace into him on the mat. The Reaper might also trap his foe in a wristlock, walk across the ropes and jump down on the extended limb. More than likely, the Undertaker would attempt to take this clash outside the ring, where he could punish his foe by smashing him into the steps and guardrail.

EDITOR'S OUTLOOK: Even in his youth, Andre could not match the Undertaker in speed. This would buy the Man from the Dark Side an advantage. Staying a few paces ahead of his opponent, the Undertaker would try hurting him with maneuvers off the ropes: flying shoulderblocks, running clotheslines, bulldog headlocks delivered from the turnbuckles. Although it has not been difficult to befuddle the Undertaker by assaulting his ever-present manager Paul Bearer, the Giant would be expected to take a more direct approach: playing off the Pale Reaper's concept of his own infallibility. Andre's style would be to lure the Undertaker into believing he could punish the Giant with the Tombstone. Then, when the Reaper buckled under his opponent's massive girth, the Eighth Wonder of the World would live up to his name by covering his celebrated adversary for the duke. ■

Fatale™ in Goin' Back to KALI part 2

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